

Jörg B. Quenzer, Dmitry Bondarev and Jan-Ulrich Sobisch (Eds.)  
**Manuscript Cultures: Mapping the Field**

# **Studies in Manuscript Cultures**



Edited by  
Michael Friedrich  
Harunaga Isaacson  
Jörg B. Quenzer

## **Volume 1**

# **Manuscript Cultures: Mapping the Field**

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Dmitry Bondarev  
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Jörg B. Quenzer

## Introduction

The invention of script and writing was one of the most important in the history of mankind. The modern concept of the “book” has been shaped for hundreds of years by the Western printed book; but for thousands of years before Gutenberg, writing was handwriting, and books were manuscripts. Seen from an age when electronic texts and the possibilities they provide seem increasingly to be replacing the traditional book and its functions, it has become clear that the modern printed book is in fact much closer to the manuscript the notion of a “print revolution” linked with the name of Gutenberg might suggest.

But it is not only the “digital revolution” that has led to a recent rise in interest in manuscripts, but also new developments in a variety of seemingly unrelated fields relevant to the scope and methodology of codicology. First, there has been a growing awareness of the benefits of cross-disciplinary research; second, the integration of science and technology has led to an enormous increase in our knowledge of the manuscripts themselves and their history; thirdly, cultural studies has rediscovered the materiality of texts; and finally, it is now, and more than ever before, deemed necessary in our global age to take into consideration the written traditions of Asia, Africa, and the Americas (not all of these of course manuscript traditions in the strict sense), in order to arrive at a truly systematic and comparative approach which extends not only to include manuscripts from “non-European” cultures, but also their cultural context.

The articles in this volume – as well as the series in which it appears – belong within this new approach, which we designate here as *manuscript studies*. In manuscript studies, the manuscript is considered as object in its own right and taken as a starting point for reconstruction of its cultural context.

Two main presuppositions of our research must be briefly outlined:

*First, the manuscript is not to be read only as a vehicle for information conveyed mainly through text or images, but studied as a physical object or artefact.* The text may be regarded as a constituent part of the object, but it is only one of many such parts, and at times perhaps not even the most important one. Manuscript studies therefore focuses primarily on the artefact: a shift in perspective that requires a certain amount of rethinking for traditional disciplines like philology, codicology, textual criticism and palaeography. In this regard, our approach shares many affinities with the concept of material culture studies.

*Second, the social and cultural context of the manuscript, as a material object, must be studied and reconstructed as completely as possible.* We refer to this

context as the particular manuscript culture to which a given manuscript belongs: the milieu in which it was and is produced, used and transmitted. It is, in turn, influenced by the artefacts it produces, and thus constitutes a highly complex whole changing in time. Furthermore, manuscript cultures are not necessarily identical with regional (e.g. India) or religious (e.g. Islamic) cultures. In one place and at one time, more than one manuscript culture can exist – for example, a manuscript culture of religious specialists working parallel to that of a scholarly elite. Florian Sobieroj, for example, discusses in his article (“Arabic Manuscripts on the Periphery”) characteristics of manuscripts which arose on the periphery of mainland Islam. He demonstrates that in spite of many common features, these peripheral traditions differ from each other and from the Islamic centre in many respects, for example in their choice of writing supports and types of script.

Following this line of inquiry, it is clear that, as a first step, ground-breaking studies are required which not only contribute to a better understanding of individual manuscript cultures, but even more importantly provide data for comparison, both from a systematic (synchronic) and from a historical (diachronic) viewpoint. With this in mind, it is precisely the broad and heterogeneous spectrum of cultures and disciplines involved that may help us overcome often unquestioned stereotypes and naive dichotomies such as “Western vs. Oriental”: stereotypes which are not only popular within Europe, but also in Asia and Africa. One of the challenges which emerges from our approach is the problem of appropriate terminology. If one were simply to adopt Western scholarly language, one would run the risk of overlooking characteristics of other cultures simply because they remain un-conceptualised in our academic discourse.

The *cross-disciplinary approach* furthermore helps at least partly to even out imbalances in current research. It is estimated that there are presently far more than ten million extant manuscripts from Asian and African cultures; this vast body of evidence stands, however, in stark contrast to the state of research. In fact, the only pre-modern book culture that has been extensively studied is that of Western Europe. Yet another sub-field can therefore be defined within our general approach: one that involved transferring, testing, and reviewing scholarly methodologies against examples from outside of Europe. Dmitry Bondarev in his article (“West African Manuscripts”) outlines the reasons for the paucity of work on sub-Saharan manuscripts written in African languages in Arabic script (*Ajami*). He applies a multidisciplinary approach to a comparative study of different manuscript types from northern Nigeria. Two particular types (genealogical lists and Qur’anic manuscripts) are examined with regard to their format, layout, script, linguistic content, and function, as well as their historical and religious contexts. The chapter shows that one more prestigious type of manuscript can influence the physical (non-textual) characteristics of other manuscripts.

In addition, in many places, there exist local traditions of scholarship with experience in using manuscripts and their own traditions of knowledge, and although their interests may not be identical to those of modern researchers, they certainly provide valuable insights. Thus, Alessandro Bausi in his article (“Writing, Copying, Translating”) examines complex “traditional” philological methods used by the copyists in Ethiopian manuscript culture, who focussed on “gaps”, “adjustments” and “normalisation” in the chain of traditional textual transmission. This allows Bausi to argue that the Ethiopian manuscript transmission has remained largely free of textual variation. This in turn helps to legitimate reconstructive principles as effective in establishing the transmission of a single text.

The necessary *shift in perspective* suggested here relates to the following main aspects of manuscript cultures:

First of all, the physical production of the manuscript in the broadest sense should be made an object of study (including knowledge of the material support, writing instruments and writing materials). Further points of interest are the act of writing, the physical assembling of the writing material, and modes of storage and their effects on the transmission of the manuscript. Finally, socio-historical factors such as economic forces must be taken into consideration, especially when dealing with commissioned works or factory-like production processes. For example, Stefan Baum’s article (“Gandhāran Scrolls”) sheds light on a recent discovery of an ancient manuscript type. After detailed investigation of its physical features he advances a hypothesis about the date and place of origin of the Gandhāran manuscript tradition of short-format scrolls.

The function of the manuscript is primarily defined by its being the carrier of text, images or other information. In some contexts, it is also a space of interaction between user and text. Thus one can find notes on manuscripts that are written records of thoughts or verbal communication about the text. These notes may include systematised paratexts: glosses, marginalia and colophons. Functionally, manuscripts are also used in primarily oral traditions as *aide-mémoires*, as scripts that contain only key words, or as guides for recitation. The article by Imre Galambos (“Punctuation Marks in Medieval Chinese Manuscripts”) is a study of various scribal notations attested in the Dunhuang manuscripts of the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. He demonstrates that these manuscripts provide evidence for the existence of a sophisticated notational system in the Chinese scribal tradition of medieval times. This system was widely used by scribes and readers who applied it for different ends.

In other cases, the function of manuscripts lies beyond their status as carriers of information in the narrow sense. James Robson (“The Archive Inside”) dis-

cusses manuscripts found within religious statues in China, a tradition which can be traced back to India. These materials include paratextual data which locate the manuscripts and the statues in space and time, and offer clues to religious practices among the laity.

Furthermore, one must take into consideration the numerous decisions that precede and accompany every single act of production or reception. Some of these are intentional decisions of the individual scribe, while others are determined by other factors, such as the genre of the text, or the school or tradition to which the scribe belongs. These decisions could be related to the materiality of the manuscripts, the corporeality of the scribe and reader, and to the aesthetic and intellectual influence of anyone involved in the production and reception process. Dominik Wujastyk (“Indian Manuscripts”) focuses on the Sanskrit and Prakrit writing tradition from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE to the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE. By sketching out the main aspects of Indian manuscript cultures, he reconstructs various examples of scribal decision-making. Furthermore, he discusses problems of preservation, textual criticism and editorial technique.

At a more abstract level, one must also take into account the relationship between manuscripts and the history of ideas or the history of thought. Christian Brockmann (“Scribal Annotation as Evidence of Learning in Manuscripts from the First Byzantine Humanism”) shows how, at a crucial moment in the history of textual transmission from Antiquity, the interaction of cultural and scribal innovations affected manuscript production, leading on the one hand to a renaissance of ancient literature, and on the other to the development of a new type of script. Methodologically, his article is a fine example of how to apply traditional disciplines like palaeography to a larger cultural context.

Using the same approach, Gudrun Melzer (“A Palaeographic Study of a Buddhist Manuscript from the Gilgit Region”) is able to reconstruct the very complicated writing process of a specific manuscript, which involved several scribes. At the same time, her article shows how closely the production of a manuscript may be related to broader religious developments: here to diminishing interest in a specific group of texts.

One may then ask if similarities between the social and cultural contexts of different manuscript cultures on the one hand, and the material evidence on the other, allow for hypotheses regarding empirical typology and perhaps even universals. The contribution of Sam van Schaik (“Towards a Tibetan Palaeography”) is a fascinating attempt to make use of Western categories of writing styles within Tibetan palaeography. In doing so, he is at the same time laying the ground for further research on the origins of Tibetan script.

Last, but not least, manuscript studies are methodologically supplemented by drawing on methods from science and technology. While research on Euro-

pean artefacts has benefited from these methods for a long time, these kinds of analytical tools – aside from digitalisation – are not well-known to specialists in manuscript cultures outside of Europe. The article of Agnieszka Helman-Ważny (“Tibetan Manuscripts: Between History and Science”) is devoted to paper, which was the dominant writing support in Central and East Asia for more than 1,500 years. By applying methods such as optical microscopy, dendrochronology, etc., she develops a new typology based on scientific examination.

Information technology allows for large amounts of data to be compared and analysed according to objective criteria. Consequently, in contrast to the primarily subjective judgments in previous studies in the fields of Asian and African manuscripts, these methods enable more objective statements to be made, for example in palaeographic studies or about the identification of fragments. On the whole, they could help to identify standards of manuscript production in different cultures.

The distinctions presented above are, of course, heuristic. They are meant to facilitate analysis, although in many cases, it will be difficult to separate them absolutely. Depending on the characteristics of the culture, the object and the research question, they may be of unequal importance in different cases. In manuscript studies, however, we need to keep the fact that manuscript cultures are complex wholes in mind. This is what the contributions presented in this volume try to exemplify.

\* \* \*

This publication is the result of two independent activities. In October 2007, Jan-Ulrich Sobisch, professor for Tibetan Studies at the University of Copenhagen, organised a four day workshop on “Manuscriptology.” This workshop convened 20 speakers and about the same number of experts from around the world who discussed manuscript cultures from Iceland and Medieval Europe to India, Central and East Asian, all the way to Latin America. For many of them it was the first time to discuss scholarly problems outside their disciplines, a dialogue that was considered stimulating and productive by all participants. In both its thematic and methodological diversity, this conference marked to a certain extent the first manifestation of “manuscript studies” emerging as a cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural field of study, albeit not yet in a systematic way.

The timing of this conference coincided with the culmination of activities at the University of Hamburg, where there had been a strong research interest in manuscripts for decades, especially in Asian philologies. Since 1972 there has been an ongoing Indological project of monumental proportions to digitalise and catalogue almost 200,000 manuscripts from Nepal (Nepal-German Manuscript

Preservation Project and its successor Nepalese-German Manuscript Cataloguing Project) funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Association). In the years since, projects on Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Tamil, and Ethiopian manuscripts were to follow.

Until the beginning of this century, however, these research interests were isolated from one another. The results of a project on “Sinological Manuscriptology” under the direction of Michael Friedrich served as a starting point to invite researchers from other disciplines at Hamburg as well as external experts, and finally, in 2007, a research unit “Manuscript Cultures in Asia and Africa” was established at the Asien-Afrika-Institut of the University of Hamburg receiving support from DFG beginning the following year. At the same time, a major publication project was drafted: the *Encyclopaedia of Manuscript Cultures in Asia and Africa* (EMCAA), which is to appear in the near future. When other European disciplines, such as Art History, Musicology, and the Classics, joined in 2011, this research group gave rise to the DFG-funded Sonderforschungsbereich 950 “Manuscript Cultures in Asia, Africa and Europe” and the associated “Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC).” Thus there exists now an institutional address for manuscript studies, the first of its kind. In addition to the cross-disciplinary research conducted at CSMC, with its manuscript laboratory for imaging and material analysis, the Centre’s members are also actively involved in field work, such as the preservation of endangered manuscripts. The graduate school affiliated with CSMC serves to train the next generation of scholars and encourage them to explore the new field.

The current volume consists of contributions based on the previous workshop in Copenhagen and is supplemented by articles by additional experts. With the exception of Latin America, all of the large manuscript cultures are represented, characterised by their specific materiality, languages, and scripts, as well as their cultural traditions. Because of the methodological considerations outlined above, significantly more space is given to regions and cultures outside of Europe. Similarly, special attention was paid to assemble pioneering investigations conducted within the traditional sub-disciplines of these fields of research, namely palaeography and codicology.

In conclusion, the editors would like first and foremost to express their gratitude to the contributors for their enduring patience – and at the same time to apologise for the delays. The publication process was prolonged again and again for a variety of reasons. Nevertheless, we hope that the results are worth the wait – and that the articles, both as individual ground-breaking studies and as a whole, will stimulate many colleagues to explore the promising field of manuscript studies.



Finally, the editors would like to express their immense gratitude to Cosima Schwarke (University of Hamburg) for managing the last stage of proofreading, and to Peter Agocs (University College London) for his careful style editing.

Hamburg, September 2014



Christian Brockmann

## Scribal Annotation as Evidence of Learning in Manuscripts from the First Byzantine Humanism: The “Philosophical Collection”<sup>1</sup>

The body of ancient Greek literary, philosophical and scientific works, comprising contributions from such divergent authors as Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Hippocrates, Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Ptolemy, and Galen, has been preserved in Greco-Roman Antiquity and in the Byzantine Empire for centuries and even millennia due to a continuous practice of manuscript work. In a permanent process of transmission, enrichment and innovation the textbooks of Greek knowledge were copied, annotated, commented upon and used in teaching and research from generation to generation. Thanks to the interest and intense work of countless scribes, scholars, practitioners and readers the masterpieces of Greek literature survived into the modern era of printing and until the present day.

The most crucial stage in this long-lasting practice of transmission falls within the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century, a period sometimes designated as the First Byzantine Humanism.<sup>2</sup> Two movements – a cultural and a graphical-medial one – moulded the manuscript culture of this era with lasting effects: Antiquity and its literature was once more restored to the centre of attention and exerted a strong impact on culture and on intellectual life. At the same time, the new minuscule script, developed from the common cursive script, became the predominant caligraphic writing system.<sup>3</sup>

Without exception, manuscripts containing religious, literary or scientific texts and canonical works had been written in majuscule script throughout the many centuries of Antiquity and Late Antiquity. An ample amount of scholarly energy was invested throughout the large-scale process of transliteration (*metacharakterismos*) and revision as this body of texts was converted into manuscripts in the new minuscule script. Whereas the majuscule continued to be used in various forms to distinguish titles, tables of content and marginal notes, and still served as the main script for biblical and religious manuscripts, the process of transliteration was all but comprehensive when it came to literary, philosophi-

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<sup>1</sup> For the English translation I owe a debt of thanks to Daniel Deckers, Johanna Cordes and Bettina Höfermann.

<sup>2</sup> Lemerle 1971, Wilson 1983a, 79–147, Rosenqvist 2007, 58–69.

<sup>3</sup> Hunger 1989, 64–65; De Gregorio 2000; Harlfinger, 2000; Perria 2000; Ronconi 2003.

cal and scientific texts. This change in the medium correlates with a thorough revision of the transmission. The identification, collection and revision of texts focused on those works that were regarded as central to the history of literature and science or as pivotal to future research. This large-scale systematic transliteration, while being a substantial scholarly and cultural achievement, thus left a marked dent in the transmission of Ancient Greek literary and philosophical works. This observation is strongly supported by the fact that the oldest extant integral manuscripts of such texts have with a rare few exceptions been produced during this era.

Thus, the tides of time are not the sole cause of the loss of all but a few at least partially complete antique and late antique manuscripts, i.e. book rolls and early codices, though numerous smaller fragments survive. The prevalence of the minuscule script in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century, and the concurrent transliteration contributed significantly to this development, for the new manuscripts did not just present themselves in new graphical attire, they moreover represented a more current, carefully and philologically revised state of knowledge. Thus anyone seriously pursuing scholarship had to rely on them, i.e. read in them and copy or excerpt from them, instead of on their older majuscule brethren.

Before proceeding to look at some of the most famous manuscripts from this era of the First Byzantine Humanism, let us briefly consider the extent to which fragments and manuscripts from Antiquity and Late Antiquity have survived.

A fundamental difficulty Classical scholarship faces compared to modern branches of literary studies is that no autographs or even manuscripts written by the author's contemporaries survive. Even of the presumably numerous textbooks produced in the centuries-long interim between Classical Antiquity and First Byzantine Humanism, only small fragments have survived for the most part. Thus, as a general rule we are dealing with a gap of at least twelve centuries between the creation of a work in the Classical period of Greece and the composition of its oldest extant complete and reliable manuscript copy.

Numerous surviving fragments from the huge amount of papyrus rolls from Ancient Greece help in filling this gap, and exceptionally fortunate circumstances have in some cases contributed to the survival of not too severely damaged papyri transmitting extensive literary texts in nearly integral form (e.g. the papyri of Aristotle's *Constitution of Athens* and of some comedies of Menander).

In the late Roman empire, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, the papyrus-roll lost its role as the main medium for preserving, circulating and transmitting literary texts to be replaced by a much more durable and resilient type of manuscript,

the parchment manuscript in codex form.<sup>4</sup> Though this change of material and structure to the nearly perfect form of a book, unchanged up to this day in its fundamental features, occurred at this early stage, few examples of this original codex production have been preserved. That rare group of precious manuscripts, written in majuscule script, includes the famous Bible codices of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Vaticanus graecus 1209<sup>5</sup> and the Codex Sinaiticus.<sup>6</sup> Manuscripts of secular literature are particularly rare, however a gem of pharmacological work and a historiographic manuscript have been preserved: the splendidly illuminated Vienna Dioscurides of the early 6<sup>th</sup> century (Vindobonensis medicus graecus 1)<sup>7</sup> and parts of the Roman History of Cassius Dio Cocceianus (Vaticanus graecus 1288, 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>8</sup> Additionally, more than 100 parchment leaves from a manuscript with Galen's *On the Powers of Foodstuff* in a majuscule script from around 500 CE have been preserved in the Wolfenbüttel codex Weissenburgensis 64. However, the Weissenburgensis is a palimpsest codex, i.e. this text had been erased to reuse the leaves in the production of a new codex together with leaves from other manuscripts, which are now in a shuffled and interspersed order as opposed to that of the original texts. The numerous leaves from the unbound Galen manuscript were mixed with leaves from Greek, Latin and Gothic-Latin manuscripts of the Bible as well as of Ambrosiaster's commentary on the epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, dating from the late 5<sup>th</sup> to early 7<sup>th</sup> century, which had also been disassembled to reuse their parchment. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, all these leaves from the several manuscripts were erased, overwritten with a Latin work and bound again. Through this process, a codex of Isidor of Seville's *Etymologiae* came into being.<sup>9</sup>

Let us now turn away from these rare copies of complete Greek manuscripts from Late Antiquity and consider the vast body of minuscule codices from the Byzantine Middle Ages and the Renaissance that supplement the small number of older manuscripts. We shall take a closer look at some exceptional examples from the time of the First Byzantine Humanism, and in particular at what has

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<sup>4</sup> Turner 1977; Goulet 2007, 34–36.

<sup>5</sup> A specimen is given in Follieri 1969, no. 1.

<sup>6</sup> <<http://codexsinaiticus.org/en/>>.

<sup>7</sup> Facsimile: Dioscurides. Codex Vindobonensis med. gr. 1 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Graz 1965–1970.

<sup>8</sup> Facsimile: Pius Franchi de' Cavalieri (ed.) (1908), Cassii Dionis Cocceiani Historiarum Romanarum lib. LXXIX LXXX quae supersunt, codex Vaticanus graecus 1288 (Codices e Vaticanis selecti. Series maior 9), Leipzig.

<sup>9</sup> Falluomini 1999, 11–46. Digital images of the codex: Wolfenbüttler Digitale Bibliothek, Codex Guelferbytanus 64 Weissenburgensis <<http://diglib.hab.de/wdb.php?dir=mss/64-weiss>>.

been called the “Philosophical Collection”, dated to the third quarter of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, of which 18 manuscripts have been identified so far.<sup>10</sup>

Nine scribes cooperated to create this collection of philosophical and scientific works,<sup>11</sup> at whose centre we have the famous Plato codex Parisinus graecus 1807<sup>12</sup> and manuscripts of Plato’s commentators Proclus, Damascius and Olympiodorus from Late Antiquity (Laurentianus Plut. 80,9<sup>13</sup>, Vaticanus gr. 2197, Marcianus gr. 196, Marcianus gr. 246, the palimpsest codex Par. Suppl. gr. 921). The further manuscripts comprise, inter alia, commentaries on Aristotle by Ammonius and Simplicius (Marcianus gr. 226 and the palimpsest codex Parisinus gr. 2575<sup>14</sup>), works of Alexander of Aphrodisias (*Quaestiones*, *On the soul*, *On fate* – Marcianus gr. 258) and John Philoponus’ anti-Proclean *On the Eternity of the World* (Marcianus gr. 236).

The learned scribes or their patrons also pursued other interests, as is particularly evident in Vaticanus gr. 1594 containing the *Almagest* of Ptolemy, or in the Heidelberg multiple-text manuscript Palatinus gr. 398. The latter reunites rare geographical treatises, e.g. those on the naval explorations of the Black and Red Sea coasts and of the west coast of Africa, with assorted wondrous tales and metamorphoses, with mythology’s tragic love stories collected by Parthenius on behalf of the Roman poet Cornelius Gallus, and with letters attributed to eminent figures such as Hippocrates and Themistocles.<sup>15</sup>

The scribe of the Heidelberg manuscript is identical to the scribe of the Plato codex Parisinus gr. 1807 (cf. figures 1 and 2). He must have been the leader or central figure in the group of scribes and scholars who compiled this collection, for Parisinus gr. 1962, Marcianus gr. 246, Laurentianus Plut. 80,9, Vaticanus gr. 2197 and the original writing in the palimpsest Parisinus suppl. gr. 921 are also in his hand.<sup>16</sup> Jean Irigoin further assigns the Vienna Aristotle codex Vindobonensis phil. gr. 100 to the circle responsible for the Philosophical Collection, as numerous marginal notes and interventions by a second hand, such as e.g. added punctuation and diacriticals of a peculiar, nearly horizontal shape, are

<sup>10</sup> Allen 1893; Wilson 1983a, 86–88; Westerink 1986, LXXIII–LXXX; Westerink 1990; Perria 1991; Brams 1999, 268; Hoffmann 2000, 621–623; Cataldi Palau 2001, 250–251; Rashed 2007a; Goulet 2007, 54–57; Cavallo 2005; Cavallo 2007; Kavrus-Hoffman 2011, 17–29. Ronconi is opposing the idea of a coherent collection and divides the manuscripts into three different groups: Ronconi 2012; Ronconi 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Perria 1991, 56–101, Cataldi Palau 2001, 252–255, Cavallo 2005, 254–255, Cavallo 2009.

<sup>12</sup> For online images refer to Gallica (cf. references).

<sup>13</sup> Online through the “Teca Digitale” (cf. references).

<sup>14</sup> Cataldi Palau 2001, with plates 52–57.

<sup>15</sup> Available online through “Heidelberger historische Bestände – digital” (cf. references).

<sup>16</sup> Perria 1991, 56–71; Cataldi Palau 2001, 252.

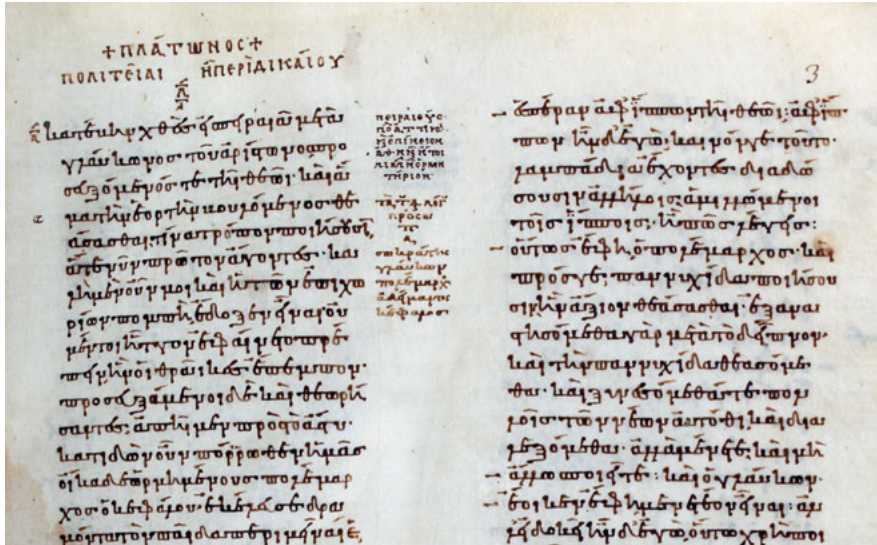


Fig. 1: Parisinus gr. 1807, fol. 3 (upper part). Bibliothèque nationale de France, source gallica. bnf.fr

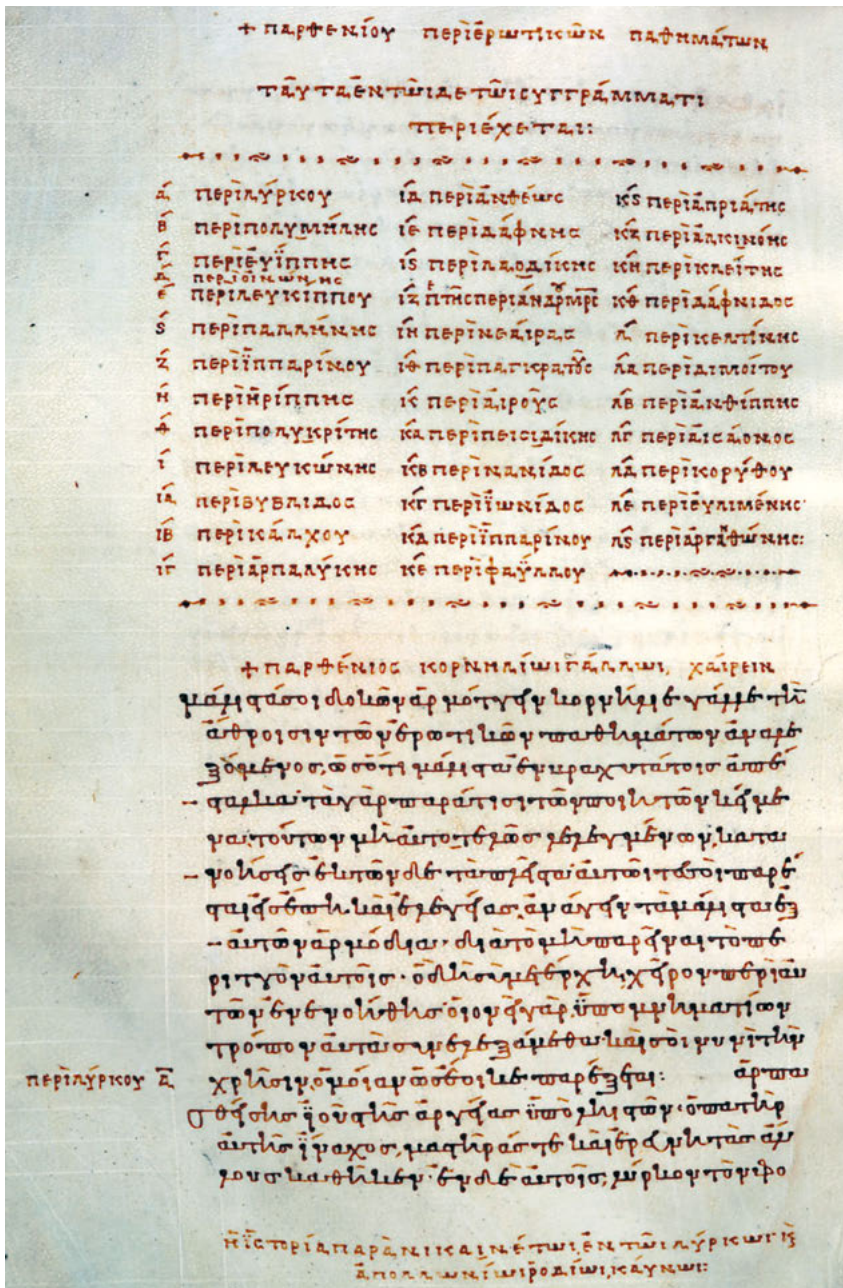
strongly reminiscent of the style of punctuation and diacritical marks particular to the main scribe of the Collection.<sup>17</sup> The distinctive abbreviation for σ(μειωσαι) (“mark this”), a stylised *sigma* and *eta*, also appears to be identical. What is more, the marginal notes used to structure the text contain catchwords in a particular small majuscule script that is reminiscent of that of the scholia and additions in the Plato codex Parisinus gr. 1807 (cf. fig.s 3, 4 and 1).<sup>18</sup> Additionally, Jozef Brams uncovered further traces pointing to a close interrelation between the Philosophical Collection and the codex Vindobonensis in book 6, in book 7 and in the first four chapters of book 8 of *Physics*.<sup>19</sup> To illustrate the structure of these books in the Vindobonensis, its annotator systematically adds the same specific version of the *paragraphos* sign that we know the main scribe of the Collection used to mark structural units, and that can also be observed as a more general addi-

<sup>17</sup> Irigoin 1957, 7; Perria 1991, 98–100 and 56–62, in particular 60, fig. 2; Koch 2011. Irigoin points to examples of the characteristic added diacriticals and punctuation marks on fol.s 24 and 26v. Further similar additions may be found e.g. on fol. 6v at the beginning of *Physics* book 2 (images may be consulted online through the Teuchos platform, cf. references).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Irigoin 1957, 7; Perria 1991, 99 and 61, fig. 4; Koch 2011. Further examples for use of σ(μειωσαι): Vindobonensis Phil. gr. 100, fol.s 9, 10v, 189v, 199v; Parisinus gr. 1807, fol.s 9v, 300v; Palatinus gr. 398, fol.s 61v, 69v.

<sup>19</sup> Brams 1999, 273; Rashed 2001, 99.





**Fig. 2:** Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg/Cod. Pal. graec. 398/173v.



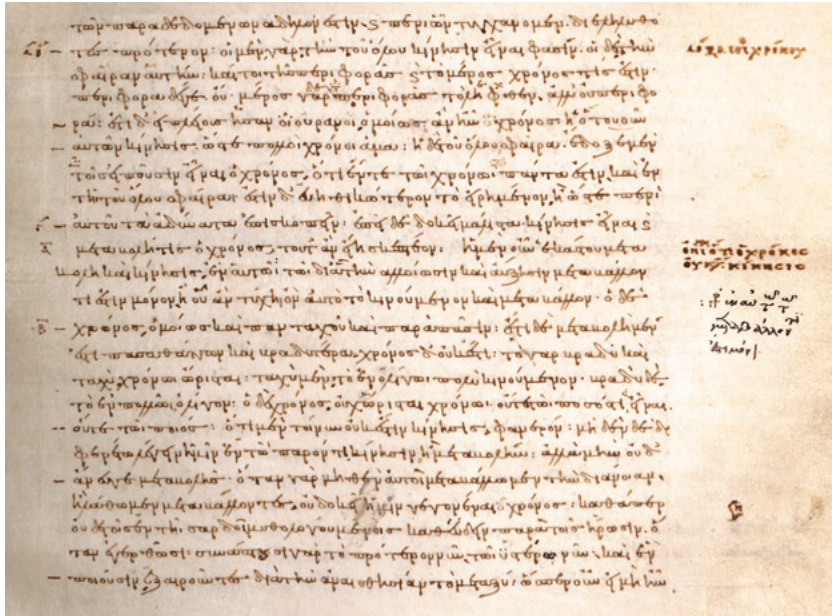


Fig. 3: Vindobonensis Phil. Gr. 100, fol. 24 (lower half). Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Phil. Gr. 100 © ÖNB, publication courtesy of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

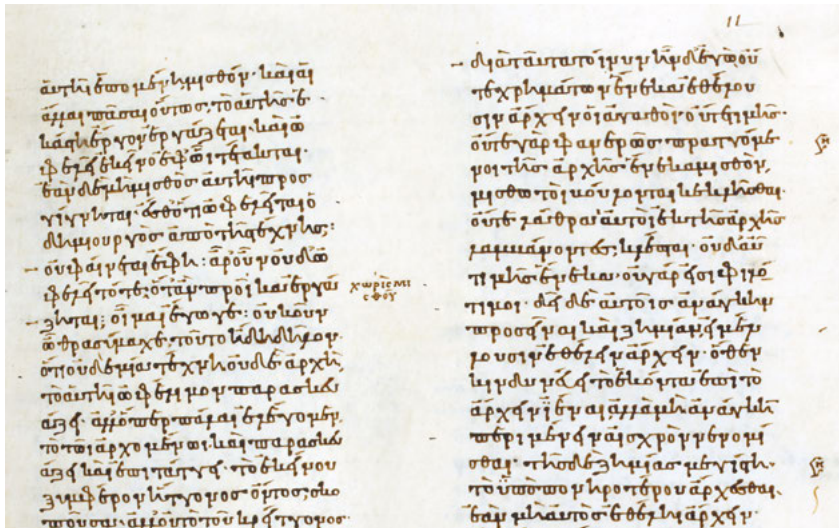


Fig. 4: Parisinus gr. 1807, fol. 11 (upper part). Bibliothèque nationale de France, source gallica. bnf.fr

tion to the plain linear paragraph marks in other parts of the Vienna Aristotle.<sup>20</sup> These specific *paragraphoi* are distinguished by use of a light brown ink and by a strong vertical stem with a light s-shaped stroke added to it, making the whole look somewhat like a stylised, compressed letter *tau*. Brams showed this sign to have been used in marking those passages of the Vienna Aristotle that Simplicius covered in his commentary on *Physics*, and that the Simplicius manuscript in the Philosophical Collection, i.e. Marcianus gr. 226, exhibits the same marking of the corresponding passages. We may thus assume our annotator to have worked simultaneously on the Aristotle manuscript and on that of the commentary, and to have concurrently added these structural markers to them. While the *ductus* of the script and the characteristics of the symbols used are indeed strikingly similar between the Plato codex and the annotations in the Aristotle manuscript, the identity of the scribes is by no means ascertained beyond doubt.<sup>21</sup> Yet we may at least conclude that the style of the additional marginal notes and marks in the Vindobonensis point to the circle of scribes and scholars responsible for creating the Philosophical Collection. Hence it seems safe to posit a close connection between the Collection and the Vienna Aristotle.

In this section, we will consider several striking examples of how the annotator structured his Aristotle manuscript. The subject matter of numerous passages is outlined briefly in short marginal notes in the particular kind of small majuscule script. Thus, in book 4 of *Physics* the summary of important opinions of Aristotle's predecessors is labeled "opinions on time" (δόξαι περὶ χρόνου, fol. 24, on *Physics* IV 10, 218a33, cf. figure 3). A few lines later we have another note indicating the reasoning that time and movement or change are not identical (ὅτι ὁ χρόνος οὐκ ἔστι κίνησις, fol. 24, on *Physics* IV 10, 218b10).<sup>22</sup> Many such pointers,

<sup>20</sup> From fol. 32v to fol. 47v (verifiable online). This sign's use by the main scribe of the Philosophical Collection is particularly evident in Palatinus gr. 398, e.g. on fol.s 60, 61v, 62 and with an even more strongly stylised vertical stroke whose swash turns into a small cross (further cf. fig. 5 in Perria 1992, 70). While I found no evidence of this *paragraphos* used to mark passages in Parisinus gr. 1807, a similar sign is occasionally added to a scholion as a concluding ornament (fol.s 115, 146, not entirely dissimilar to that used in a marginal note on fol. 156 of Laurentianus Plut. 80,9). Further examples of this sign in other parts of Vindobonensis Phil. gr. 100 include fol.s 1, 1v, 147v, 157, 176, 191. Fol.s 13v and 21v exhibit the sign next to structuring marginalia in the small majuscule script typical of the annotator. The sign is executed less meticulously as we proceed to the final books of *Metaphysics* in the Vindobonensis, with the vertical stroke losing straightened and plain.

<sup>21</sup> Irigoin 1962, 300 = Irigoin 2003, 218.

<sup>22</sup> Marginal notes adding similar structure may be found e.g. on fols. 38v, 44v and 45. The annotator seems to have been particularly interested in passages dealing with time. This coincides with the fact that the Philosophical Collection also transmits the short treatise on time by Zachary of Chalcedon (in codex Marcianus gr. 258, fol. 324), a friend of eminent scholar and patriarch

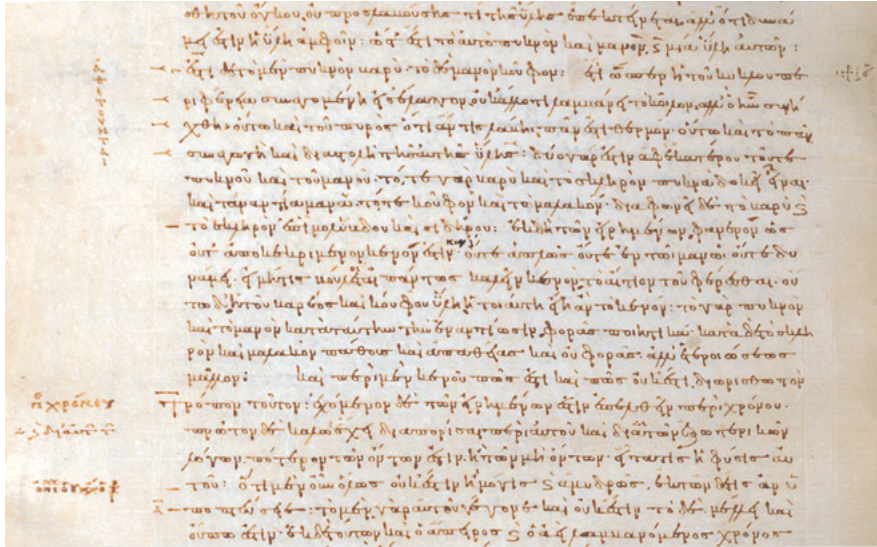


Fig. 5: Vindobonensis Phil. Gr. 100, fol. 23v (detail) Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Phil. Gr. 100. © ÖNB, publication courtesy of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

including those cited, are introduced by an abbreviation consisting of *ἐπι* with two letters *chi* above, which should likely be read as *ἐπιχειρήματα*, i.e. demonstration or proof. We adduce further examples to illustrate our point: The various arguments against the existence of time in *Physics* IV 10, 217b32 are similarly introduced by our annotator (fol. 23v, fig. 5): *ἐπιχ(ειρήματα) ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ χρόνος*. This wording is strongly reminiscent of Simplicius, whose comments on this passage commence thus: “He puts forth three arguments that (purport to) show that time does not exist” (Τρία τίθησιν ἐπιχειρήματα δεικνύντα ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ χρόνος, Diels 1882a, 696). Another example in support of our interpretation of the introductory abbreviation is found in the context of the arguments on the void and whether movement can exist within it, where the significant importance of this passage (*Physics* IV 8, 215a24) is highlighted: *ἐπιχ(ειρήματα) πραγματειωδέστατα* (fol. 22). This briefest of indications also alludes to the tradition of Aristotelian exegesis as evidenced by Simplicius’ comment on this passage, where the same adjective

Photius (approx. 810–890). Klaus Oehler has edited this work and proven that one of the arguments proffered in it is based on exactly that passage of *Physics* (Oehler 1957, 34). One has to wonder whether there is a connection and if Zachary or Photius himself might have had access to this manuscript. However, it is quite uncertain whether the Philosophical Collection can be assigned to Photius’ circle (on this cf. below).

in its rare superlative degree is used to underline the weight of the arguments: τὰς πραγματειωδεστάτας νῦν ἀποδείξεις προσάγει τῷ λόγῳ δεικνύς, ὅτι οὐκ ἔσται κίνησις ἐν κενῷ (Diels, 1882a, 671). It is evident from these examples that the marginalia used to structure the manuscript and the extensive text of Aristotle are by no means spontaneously conceived marks of an arbitrary annotator, but rather indicate a learned and thorough familiarity with the Antique and Late Antique tradition of explaining Aristotle. The catchphrases in these annotational headings clearly allude to this context. The same most likely holds true for the cases where our annotator adds symbols or numbers instead of full marginalia to retrace the structure of the argument. E.g. on fol. 7 in the left margin, he adds additional *paragraphoi* and letters representing Greek numerals in a light brown ink to the existing marks from the original hand.

In the vicinity of the first examples (f. 23v, figure 5) we observe a philological intervention indicated in a thoroughly regular manner, namely an *athetesis* of several lines of text, i.e. the indication that these lines are either not original or had been transposed from their proper location. While this marginal indication is not due to our annotator, but to the scribe of the Vindobonensis himself,<sup>23</sup> it nevertheless illustrates the mechanisms of manuscript work of the learned scribes and the long tradition from which they originate. In the case at hand, four lines of text are marked to be deleted by the double use of an inverted *diple obelismene*, both as interlinearly superimposed indicators of the beginning and end of the dubious passage and next to all four lines in the margin in the manner of quotation indicators. Additionally, “they are declared void” is added vertically in the margin: ἀθετοῦνται (*Physics* IV 9, 217b12–16).<sup>24</sup> The scribe most likely copied this term of textual criticism from the original he used, for this passage treating the line of the circle and various degrees of inclination had already been considered a duplication of a previous argument (from *Physics* IV 9, 217b2–6) by the exegetes of Late Antiquity. Thus, Simplicius summarily observed: “This passage seems to repeat what has been said before” (αὕτη ἡ ῥῆσις δοκεῖ τὰ πρότερον εἰρημένα πάλιν λέγειν).<sup>25</sup> He regarded these lines as uselessly rephrasing an argument without adding anything to it, and observes, as he is wont, that the incriminated sentence was not present in all manuscripts. According to his judgement, we are dealing with what was originally a marginal note (a *paragraphé*) that was accidentally inserted into the main text by a scribe, and we may add, further transposed by a few lines.<sup>26</sup> John

<sup>23</sup> Koch 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Diels 1882a, 690.

<sup>26</sup> Diels 1882a, 691: [...] ἀλλ' ἐκείνων τίς ἐστι παράφρασις· διὸ καὶ ἐν τισιν ἀντιγράφοις οὐ φέρεται ὡς ἀπὸ παραγραφῆς εἰσενεχθεῖσα (τοιούτος καὶ ὁ τοῦ λόγου χαρακτήρ) [...].



Philoponus came to a similar conclusion and further informs us that “the exegetes do not consider (these lines) to be authentic”.<sup>27</sup> Evidently, there was agreement on this matter among the authorities interpreting the passage (even unto today).<sup>28</sup> Yet, in their careful methodology, Simplicius and Philoponus treat the text with reverence, opting not to radically excise the passage from their manuscripts, but rather to observe their doubts in their commentary.<sup>29</sup> As we have seen, the method used in the Vindobonensis Phil. gr. 100, the oldest extant manuscript of *Physics*, is not dissimilar: The passage has been left in the text, in the (inappropriate) location where it was found, but unambiguously indicated as spurious in the margin.

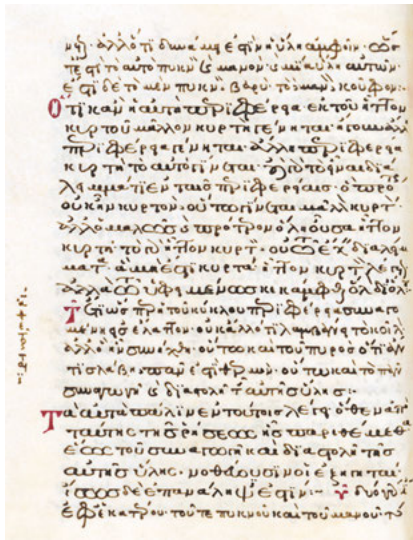


Fig. 6: Plut. 87,6, fol. 229v © Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, on concession of the MiBACT.

<sup>27</sup> Vitelli 1888, 701.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Diels 1882b, 32 and the commentaries by Ross 1936, 594 and Wagner 1995, 586.

<sup>29</sup> The oldest extant manuscript of Philoponus' commentary on *Physics* is Plut. 87,6 in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana (12<sup>th</sup> century, codex G in the editions of Aristotle and of Philoponus). It contains only *Physics* book IV, the text of Aristotle is quoted in lemmata followed by the commentary. The passage in question (fol. 229v) also has the addition ἀθετούνται in vertical lettering next to the lemma, followed by Philoponus' commentary (figure 6, cf. online). On this codex cf. Vitelli 1887, V–VIII, XIII–XIV and Wiesner's description in *Aristoteles Graecus* (Morau/ Harlfinger/Reinsch/Wiesner 1976), the latter available online through the Teuchos site.

The second oldest manuscript of *Physics*, the famous codex Parisinus gr. 1853 from the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century (codex E), that like the Vindobonensis has *De caelo*, *De generatione et corruptione*, *Meteorologica* and both the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle and of Theophrast, and adds *De anima* and further treatises of the *Parva Naturalia* to these, treats the mentioned passage in the same way as the Vienna manuscript. On fol. 31, we observe the same indication ἀθετοῦνται in the right margin – most likely from the hand of the first annotator of the manuscripts (E<sup>2</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>30</sup> – and plain *obeloi* to the left of the lines in questions (figure 7).<sup>31</sup>

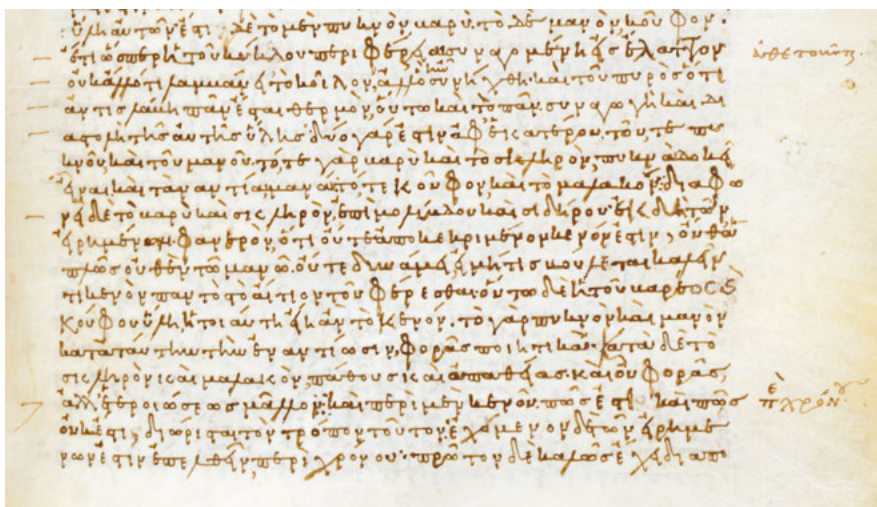


Fig. 7: Parisinus gr. 1853, fol. 31 (detail). Bibliothèque nationale de France, source gallica.bnf.fr

This careful indication of textual criticism in both codices is clear and presents evidence that the scribes and scholars involved in the production of these early minuscule manuscripts had access to older manuscripts of the highest quality that transmitted textual variants and observations of textual criticism. But the

<sup>30</sup> On this script cf. Moraux 1967, 29f.; Hecquet-Devienne 2000, 126–132; Rashed 2001, 37–38, 43–48.

<sup>31</sup> Online through Gallica, cf. references. The further manuscript relevant to textual criticism, Laurentianus Plut. 877, written by Ioannikios (mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, codex F), has no indication that the passage in question might not belong to the text (fol. 42v, cf. online). On this manuscript cf. Rashed 2001, 131–159, and on the importance of Ioannikios and his scribal collaborators further cf. Wilson 1983b; Vuillemin-Diem/Rashed 1997; Primavesi 2006; Brockmann 2008.

manuscripts also bear witness to the thorough and expert nature of these scribes' own work.<sup>32</sup>

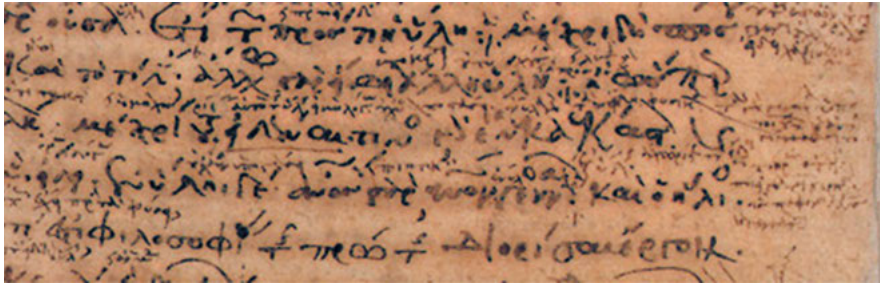
Let us now take a look on the very few passages that have been marked as particularly noteworthy by the annotator of the Vienna Aristotle manuscripts using the distinctive abbreviation for σημείωσαι. We find an almost completely faded example of this mark in the margin of fol. 8 facing a line of text that contains the famous central thesis of Aristotle's on the natural generation and the part of the formal and efficient causes: "for man is generated by man and by the sun" (ἄνθρωπος γὰρ ἄνθρωπον γεννᾷ καὶ ἥλιος, *Physics* II 2, 194b13).<sup>33</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, our manuscript attests to a variant of this formula, for γεννᾷ was originally followed by ἐξ ὕλης. However, this was apparently recognised as a spurious addition at some point, and the words erased in the manuscript are now hardly discernable any more. The Parisinus gr. 1853 also has an erasure and correction at this point, but its original content at that location can no longer be reconstructed (fol. 12). The resulting text is the same as in the Vienna Aristotle manuscript after the correction, which has been adopted by all modern editors with good reason. In the Laurentianus Plut. 87,7 ἐξ ὕλης, though not included in the main body of text, is superposed in a second hand (fol. 11, figure 8). Today's major editions neglect to mention this textual variant or uncertainty attested in three of the most important manuscripts of Aristotle's *Physics*. Obviously ἐξ ὕλης should not be part of the text of an edition, but we should be aware (and be made aware) that even in passages like this the form of the text now considered to be unambiguously correct is based on thorough previous manuscript work from Antiquity through the Byzantine era.

In the chapters on chance and spontaneity in *Physics*, the statement that some regard to *automaton* (i.e. spontaneity) as the cause of this world and of all worlds (fol. 9, *Physics* II 4, 196a24) is the first item designated as noteworthy. The *nota bene* mark also graces the lengthy argument's final conclusion that *nous* and *physis* (reason and nature) have priority over spontaneity and chance and are the true and prior causes of the universe (fol. 10v, *Physics* II 6, 198a9–13).<sup>34</sup> Further evidence for a particular interest in passages dealing with the heaven, the heavenly bodies and their mechanics is found much later in the manuscript, where σημείωσαι marks a statement in book 9 of *Metaphysics* that "the sun and stars and the whole visible heaven are always active, and there is no fear that they will

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Diels 1882b, 19, 24f, but note Rashed's unfavorable judgement on scribe E I of Parisinus gr. 1853 (Rashed 2001, 39). On the importance of the two manuscripts to the textual tradition of *Metaphysics* and *De generatione et corruptione* cf. Harlfinger 1979; Rashed 2001.

<sup>33</sup> On this thesis cf. Oehler 1962a, 260–288; Düring 1966, 530–533.

<sup>34</sup> The final passage has also been marked with σημείωσαι in Parisinus gr. 1853 (fol. 15).



**Fig. 8:** Plut. 87,7, fol. 11 (detail). © Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, on concession of the MiBACT.

ever stop – a fear which the writers on physics entertain.” (fol. 172v, *Metaphysics* IX 8, 1050b22, transl. Tredennick, Aristotle 1968).

Aristotle colours his theoretical discourse on time in book 4 of *Physics* with an unusual example he refers to as a mythical tale, and this passage (fol. 24), too, receives the mark ση(μείωσαι). This myth is used to illustrate the observation that we do not perceive the passage of time unless we become aware of a change in our thoughts. “... as it also seems to those who are said to lie asleep in Sardinia among the heroes, for when they are awakened, they join the earlier Now to the later Now and make one of them, excising the in-between since they did not experience it.” (*Physics* IV 11, 218b23–27). According to Simplicius, these heroes are the nine sons of Hercules, whose bodies were said to have been preserved completely intact and whole after they met their deaths on the island. They had the appearance of sleepers, and it became customary to take a long sleep in their vicinity to receive dreams or experience other beneficial effects.<sup>35</sup>

We may conclude from the occasional use of the *nota bene* indicator we have seen that it cannot be adduced as evidence for any systematical epistemological interest of the annotator. In the least, though, it does point to a certain fascination with unusual theses or their refutation as well as for mythological matter and paradoxical thought.<sup>36</sup> Occasionally, quotes from poets or allusions to them are also indicated in the margin,<sup>37</sup> as are key methodological conclusions of a theological or scientific nature that may have been seen as useful quotes outside their original contexts, such as “the divine encompasses all of nature” or “we have to

<sup>35</sup> Diels 1882a, 707f. Further, cf. John Philoponus (Vitelli 1888, 717f.) as well as Rohde 1880 and Ross 1936, 597.

<sup>36</sup> Fol. 26 (referring to *Physics* IV 12, 221a22–23).

<sup>37</sup> Fol. 189v (referring to the shortened quote of Homer at the end of *Metaphysics* book 12, 10, 1076a7) and fol. 199v (*Metaphysics* XIV 3, 1091a5–10).



partly research the details ourselves, and partly learn them from other researchers, and if those who considered the matter provide evidence to the contrary of what has been said before, we have to appraise both opinions, but heed the more accurate one.”<sup>38</sup>

The discussed traces of learned intervention evident in the Vienna Aristotle manuscript place it within the vicinity of the Philosophical Collection in general, and of its main scribe in particular. This scribe has to be regarded as a man of learning, as shown e.g. by Westerink, who points to the evidence of extensive philological and critical intervention during the process of transcription in codex Marcianus gr. 246 (written in the same hand), which contains the treatise *On the first principles of Damascius*, considered to be one of the most intricate texts in Greek literature.<sup>39</sup> In view of the outstanding quality of these manuscripts and their significance to the transmission of the Platonic and Neoplatonic works in particular, as well as of the singular beauty of some of them such as e.g. the Plato codex Parisinus gr. 1807, there have been many attempts to identify the main scribe (or his supposed client) with one of the more eminent Constantinopolitans of the time. The proposals include Photius, Leo the philosopher and, quite recently brought forth by Marwan Rashed, Bardas the regent, but it is doubtful that enough evidence will come to light to reach a consensus on this matter.<sup>40</sup>

One of the main arguments in support of a link between Parisinus gr. 1807 and Leo is the marginal note on fol. 200 (i.e. Plato, *Nomoi* V 743b), frequently quoted, that indicates the conclusion of the corrections by the “great” Leo: τέλ(ος) τῶν διορθ(ω)θέντων ὑπὸ τοῦ μεγ(άλου) λέο(ν)τος (cf. fig. 9).<sup>41</sup> This note, set unusually far in the margin to the outer right, is at least a few decades younger than the main text. It is unlikely to be from the same annotator of the 10<sup>th</sup> century who left traces on a few leaves, e.g. on fol.s 201 and 215 (fig. 10),<sup>42</sup> but might be contemporary. Thus, our note may possibly be nearly a century or even more younger than the completion of the manuscript. Any conclusions from it to the original context of the manuscript’s creation, its owner or annotator must therefore be taken with more than a grain of salt. The entire note might, to add just one scenario, have

<sup>38</sup> Folio 188v (*Metaphysics* XII 8, 1074b3) and fol. 188 (*Metaphysics* XII 8, 1073b13–17).

<sup>39</sup> Westerink 1986, LXXVII; Westerink 1990, 122f.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. e.g. Irigoin 1962, 298–300 = 2003, 215–218; Wilson 1983a, 86–88; Westerink 1986, LXXVI–LXXX; Westerink 1990; Hoffmann 2000, 621–623; Rashed 2007a, 533–537; Cavallo 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Lemerle 1971, 168; Wilson 1983a, 84; Irigoin 1962, 293 = Irigoin 2003, 207.

<sup>42</sup> The ductus of the annotator is reminiscent of that of scribe D of the Aristotle manuscript Parisinus gr. 1741 (cf. Tafel II b and c in Harlfinger/Reinsch 1970). Cf. the online images of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Gallica, cf. references). The annotator supplied the text in two extensive lacunae on fol. 201 and 215, respectively (*Nomoi* 5, 745a–c; 6, 783b–d), for these cf. Irigoin 1986, 12 = Irigoin 2003, 93; Saffrey 2007, 4f, 8.

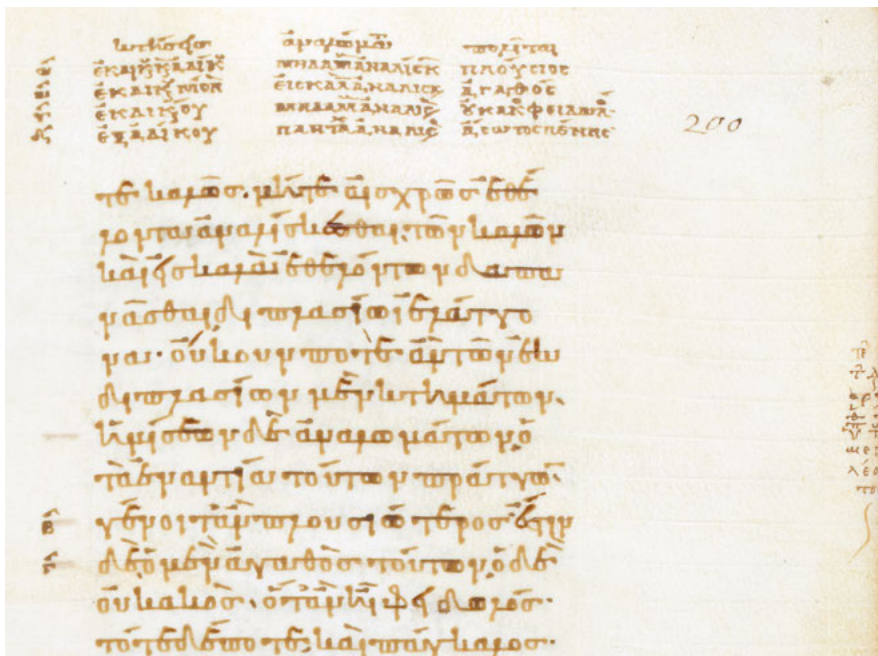


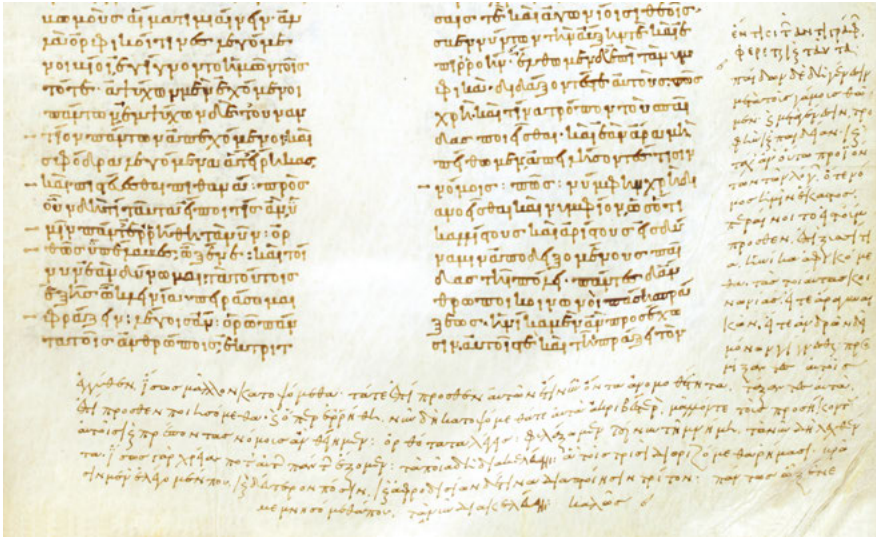
Fig. 9: Parisinus gr. 1807, fol. 200 (upper part). Bibliothèque nationale de France, source gallica.bnf.fr

been copied from another manuscript. These questions should undergo a new and thorough investigation that will in particular have to consider the Plato codex Vaticanus gr. 1 that has this same note.

To conclude our appraisal of the Philosophical Collection, let us take another look at the most famous manuscript from the Collection, the Plato codex Parisinus gr. 1807, which is known to have found its way to the Latin west in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and can most likely be identified with Petrarch's Greek Plato manuscript.<sup>43</sup> This codex is the second volume of a formerly complete edition of Plato in manuscript form. It contains tetralogies VIII and IX as well as the pseudo-Platonic treatises.<sup>44</sup> There is strong evidence for it indeed being part of a complete

<sup>43</sup> Diller 1964; Saffrey 2007, 14–23. According to Saffrey (2007, 5–23), the Parisinus gr. 1807 and its twin, i.e. the first volume of the complete works of Plato, may have been brought to Armenia in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and there used as the source for the Armenian translations of Plato, then to Avignon in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and thence into the possession of Petrarch, a fascinating argument.

<sup>44</sup> Erbse 1988, 258; Irigoin 1994a, 151f. (first published 1986); Boter 1989, 45–48, 112; Saffrey 2007, 3.



**Fig. 10:** Parisinus gr. 1807, fol. 215 (lower part). Bibliothèque nationale de France, source gallica. bnf.fr

edition in two volumes both in the arrangement of the Platonic dialogues according to the tetralogies as well as in the consecutive numbering of the dialogues or their individual books. Notably, the first dialogue in the Parisinus, *Kleitophon*, has the number κθ (= 29) underneath its title, followed by the books of the *Politeia*, individually numbered from λ (= 30) for the first book.<sup>45</sup> We may, as did Erbse and Irigoin, take this numbering, clearly intended to cover the whole, to attest to the former existence of a first volume covering dialogues 1 through 28, i.e. the tetralogies I through VII.<sup>46</sup> Thus, we agree with Westerink<sup>47</sup> that the Philosophical Collection must originally, i.e. upon its inception in Constantinople in the third quarter of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, have contained another Plato codex, and there must thus have been a complete edition in two volumes. While the first volume is now lost, at least a descendant of it from several decades after has survived in the form of a manuscript from the hand of the highly productive scribe Ephraim, preserved as the Venice codex Marcianus 4, 1. This manuscript from the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century, however, is probably not a direct copy of the lost first volume of our Plato from

<sup>45</sup> Fol. 1 and fol. 3, cf. the online images of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Gallica, see references). Cf. fig. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Erbse 1983, 258; Irigoin 1994a, 151f. (first published 1986).

<sup>47</sup> Westerink 1986, LXXV; Westerink 1990, 107.

the third quarter of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, we must rather reconstruct an intermediate stage in between.<sup>48</sup> Evidence for this has been brought forth by Boter in his direct comparison of the first books of *Politeia* in Parisinus gr. 1807 and Marcianus 4, 1. This comparison is possible because the Marcianus' original textual content from Ephraim's hand does not conclude with tetralogy VII as the posited first volume complementary to Parisinus gr. 1807, but continues with *Kleitophon* and the beginning of *Politeia* through to book 3, 389d.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the scribes of later manuscripts deviated from the division of the complete works after tetralogy VII. And yet the Marcianus 4, 1, as Erbse and Boter have pointed out, contains a clear trace of a former split at the very location marked by the Parisinus gr. 1807 and its hypothetical first volume counterpart: At the end of tetralogy VII, the Marcianus 4, 1 has a note evidently referring to the arrangement in its predecessor: "End of the first volume".<sup>50</sup> Boter's conclusion that the Marcianus is not a direct descendant of the Parisinus where the first books of *Politeia* are concerned has far-reaching implications. One may assume that the same would hold true for the other parts that can no longer be compared to this manuscripts predecessors, i.e. the Platonic dialogues from tetralogies I through VII, and that, as a consequence, Ephraim did not have access to Parisinus gr. 1807 and its counterpart for his work on the Plato manuscripts in the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century, but he rather used a no longer extant copy of these two earlier manuscripts. With both the first volume of Plato from the Philosophical Collection and the postulated reconstructed intermediate copy of the entire Plato now lost, the Marcianus 4,1 must today be considered the most important and oldest Plato manuscript in this branch of the transmission for the first seven tetralogies of the Platonic dialogues, alongside the seven to eight decades older *codex vetustissimus* Parisinus gr. 1807 for the remainder. Put more simply: the Plato manuscript from Ephraim's hand is the surviving representative of an older manuscript that once formed part of the Philosophical Collection.

Since we have been considering the oldest Plato manuscripts in minuscule script, two further important codices should be mentioned briefly in conclusion, whose times of origin fall between those of Parisinus gr. 1807 and Marcianus 4, 1. I refer to the manuscripts E.D. Clarke 39, i.e. the Oxford Bodleianus (Codex B, the oldest manuscript of the first 24 dialogues, tetralogies I through VI), and the

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<sup>48</sup> Erbse 1983, 258; Irigoin 1994a, 156 (first published 1986); Boter 1989, 56, 111–118; a sample from the codex to be found in Brockmann 1992, Abb. 39. On the scribe Ephraim cf. Prato 1982.

<sup>49</sup> The part in Ephraim's hand ends at this point, the missing books have been supplied from other codices in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Boter 1989, 55f.; Brockmann 1992, 34.

<sup>50</sup> Erbse 1983, 258; Boter 1989, 112.

Vaticanus gr. 1 (Codex O, *Nomoi* etc.) from around 900 CE.<sup>51</sup> The details on the Clarkianus are known from its preserved colophon which informs us that the manuscript was written in the year 895 CE by the calligrapher John on behalf of Arethas, Deacon of Patras (the later Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia).<sup>52</sup> Numerous scholia and marginal glosses are from Arethas' own hand. There is no agreement whether the same holds true for a group of marginalia in Vaticanus gr. 1.<sup>53</sup> These short pointers on these latter manuscripts must suffice, as a more thorough examination is outside the scope of this paper which is intended as a first introduction to the bountiful field of research into the manuscripts of classical texts from the Byzantine period, drawing on representative examples from the earliest minuscule script codices. The manuscript work of the scholars and scribes during the First Byzantine Humanism is rooted in the exegetical traditions of Antiquity and Late Antiquity and anticipates that of generations to come. This is evident in the manuscripts they wrote and annotated, which speak to their efforts to provide structure to the abundance of texts and knowledge, and to adapt and update it according to their philological, critical and exegetical approaches. These manuscripts attest to these scribes' and annotators' scholarly creativity, their effort, achievements and merits, and they can be used to retrace intellectual circles and centres of joint work on the manuscripts. Their approach is characteristic for Greek and Byzantine manuscript culture, and was replicated in subsequent periods, as is evident e.g. in the manuscript work by such eminent scholars of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries as Maximos Planudes, Georgios Pachymeres and Demetrios Triklinios, or later, in the Renaissance, by Bessarion. Greek and Byzantine manuscript culture is a rich field of research lending itself particularly to comparative approaches in the context of manuscript research as a general field.

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**51** Facsimile of E. D. Clarke 39: Allen 1898–1899, online <<http://bodley30.bodley.ox.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet/view/all/what/MS.+E.+D.+Clarke+39>>. A sample from Vaticanus gr. 1: Follieri 1969, No. 19.

**52** Allen 1898–1899, V, fol. 418v; Irigoin 1994a, 154 (first published 1986); Brockmann 1992, 37f.

**53** Follieri 1969, No. 19; Wilson 1983a, 129; Perria 1990, 72–75; Brockmann 1992, 37–41.

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Alessandro Bausi

# Writing, Copying, Translating: Ethiopia as a Manuscript Culture<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Introduction

Beginning with the remote past of the Aksumite kingdom (1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, an “African civilization of Late Antiquity”), the Ethiopian cultural area offers a peculiar case study for the “manuscriptology” of ancient, medieval and modern times. Historically a land of written civilizations since the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, the areas nowadays corresponding to the highlands of Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia witnessed the early introduction of the parchment roll and codex, the latter having been strongly fostered by the Christianization of the country in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. Taking advantage of the safe, dry climate of the Abyssinian highlands, which makes chemical treatment quite unnecessary, manuscript production has enjoyed a steady run of centuries, down to the present day. Even now, parchment is still produced in several areas of the region. Mainly an object of interest to historians, philologists and linguists as precious repositories of written historical and linguistic data, the Ethiopian manuscripts written in Ethiopic (especially literary texts), and to a lesser extent in Amharic (especially documentary texts), Arabic and Harari (in Islamic contexts), have not yet become a topic of codicological study within the frame of modern, so-called “manuscript archaeology”, nor have they been properly assessed from a comparative or quantitative perspective. The estimated number of manuscripts ranges from a minimum of 25,000 to 200,000, and the figure may even be higher if we take into account the treasure of still unexplored and hardly accessible manuscripts preserved in the Tegray monasteries, the “cradle” of Ethiopian civilization. Despite the relatively recent age of most Ethiopic manuscripts (among which only two or three Four Gospels books may predate the 12<sup>th</sup> century), several archaic features which Ethiopian culture has inherited from Mediterranean Late Antiquity make codicological evaluation all the more desirable. Nowadays, however, observable

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank most sincerely the organizers of the Workshop in “Manuscriptology”, October 8–11, 2007, University of Copenhagen, Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, for having offered me the unique opportunity to put forward a wide range of problems pertaining to a variety of disciplines. I would like to extend my thanks to Dmitry Bondarev, who has so competently and patiently taken care of the editorial revision of this paper, as well as to the anonymous reviewer for his equally patient and careful reading. Usual disclaims apply, *i.e.* the final text is entirely my own responsibility.

features (or even features traceable to medieval times) cannot be mechanically identified as archaic traditional practices. Ethiopian production of parchment and codices must have been of primary importance even in ancient times, bearing in mind that Islamic sources unanimously accredit the “invention of the codex” to African people and that the Arabic term *muṣṣḥaf* ‘codex’ (almost entirely associated with the Qur’an codex) was borrowed from Ethiopic. Ink production is an important material aspect of manuscript studies. Ethnographic observation of surviving examples, as well as philological and linguistic data (*i.e.* study of terminology) attest to the absence of metallic ink in Ethiopia, although it was widely used both in other Christian and in Islamic provinces in course of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium CE. Yet much is expected from reliable laboratory analyses. As far as transmission is concerned, Ethiopic manuscripts reveal substantially “mechanical” textual traditions. This strongly clashes with both the purported predominance of orality in Africa and (as an assumed consequence) copyists’ arbitrariness in transmitting texts. Documentary texts may present peculiar transmission phenomenology. Yet, copyists’ actual attitude to the transmitted texts can only be ascertained through manuscript collation, which has not yet been extensively done for most printed editions of Ethiopic texts. I will present a panoramic view of the state of the research on Ethiopic manuscripts, and then a particular case study of “manuscript philology” that focuses on “gaps”, “adjustments” and “normalization” in the chain of traditional textual transmission.

## 2 A long written tradition

The peculiarities of manuscript production in Ethiopian culture find their origin in the very late introduction of printing, whose extensive use does not predate the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The existence of a writing tradition three millennia old is no doubt the most paradoxical and exotic aspect of Ethiopian civilization (historically understood) in the context of Africa south of the Sahara.<sup>2</sup> Geographically included in, though not corresponding to the political boundaries of the present independent states of Eritrea and Ethiopia, the geographic area of Ethiopian civilization is one of extreme linguistic and anthropological variety. The long continuity of the South-Semitic written tradition has made it the subject of linguistic, philological and historical studies which have been relatively consistently focused on long-lasting cultural features, from the origins of the civilization through ancient

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Munro-Hay 1991; Brakmann 1994; for an updated and comprehensive presentation of all the main topics in Ethiopian Studies, see *EAE*.

and medieval times to the premodern and – in some respects – the modern ages. The earliest evidence of writing in the area is represented by monumental and cursive Sabaic inscriptions which date to the mid-1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE (probably the 8<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries). These bear witness to the strong influence of the South Arabian civilization then flourishing on the opposite side of the Red Sea, which probably settled on African soil over an earlier South-Semitic substratum also of Asiatic origin.<sup>3</sup>

Mentioned in various sources since the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, the “Kingdom of Aksum” – named after its capital city in Northern Ethiopia, in present-day Tegray – reached its peak of power in the period from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, after centuries of development. It represented – in ways not yet really clear – a well rooted Semitic civilization, increasingly penetrated by the Greek culture circulating along the shores of the Red Sea since the Hellenistic age. Near-Eastern South-Arabian, African and Asiatic components all influenced it, alone, mutually, and in combination. Starting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century at least, evidence of inscriptions (until the 5<sup>th</sup> century) and coins legends testifies to the use of Greek as well as Ethiopic (also known as Ancient Ethiopic or Ge’ez).<sup>4</sup> A South-Semitic language easily distinguished from South-Arabian (whose alphabet – not the language – was occasionally used in royal inscriptions), Ethiopic was destined to be the only written language of the Kingdom for a millennium and a half, well after it had ceased to be spoken or had become a different language, Tigrinya (probably around the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> century). As will be shown, the language change had its “manuscriptological” consequences for the transmission of Ethiopic texts.

Conversion to Christianity, introduced in Ethiopia in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE and, as Cosmas Indicopleustes attests in his *Topographia Christiana*, widely established throughout the East by the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup>, had a major and lasting impact on Ethiopian culture. The Ethiopian Church, whose official language was always Ethiopic, remained subordinate to the Egyptian Church of Alexandria, whose official language was initially Greek, later Coptic and finally Arabic, almost without interruption until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> Aksum reached the height of its glory as the main military partner of the Byzantine Empire in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century, when South Arabia had also been under Aksumite control for some decades. The emergence of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century followed by the occupation of the African coasts in the 8<sup>th</sup>, dramatically put an end to Ethiopia’s central role in the trade routes along the

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3 Cf. Marrassini 2003b. For inscriptions, cf. Bernand / Drewes / Schneider 1991; Bernand 2000; cf. also Avanzini 2007a; Müller 2007; and Marrassini 2014.

4 Cf. Fiaccadori 2007a; Avanzini 2007b; Frantsouzoff 2007; Fiaccadori 2007b.

5 The Ethiopian Church became completely autocephalous only in 1959 with Patriarch Bäselyos, cf. Chernetsov 2005.

Red Sea, as well as to its intense relationship with other areas of Christian culture. In the following centuries, the core of the Christian kingdom moved progressively southwards from Aksum to Lālibalā, the rockhewn capital of the Zāg<sup>wē</sup> dynasty in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, until it reached Amharic-speaking areas, where it has been mainly based since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. At the southern limits of the kingdom, Addis Ababa, the present capital of Ethiopia, was founded at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, the heritage of Aksum deeply marked the history of the whole Ethiopian area. The Christian kingdom played a hegemonic role in the region until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It is surprising, however, that *maṣṣhaf*, the most general Ge'ez term for 'manuscript, book, writing' in all its meanings, was borrowed into Arabic, where *muṣṣhaf* became a technical term for a Qur'anic codex. This seems to imply that Ethiopian production of parchment and codices must have been of major importance even in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times, and that the Arabs, "people of the Book" *par excellence*, adopted the use of the codex from the Ethiopians, who had received it in turn from the late antique Near-Eastern and Mediterranean world. This hypothesis is confirmed by a relatively ancient Islamic tradition attested in the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century by Abū 'Uthmān al-Jāḥiẓ in his *Fakhr al-sūdān 'alā l-biḍān* ('The boasts of the Blacks over the Whites').<sup>6</sup>

As an "African civilization of Late Antiquity", the Aksumite kingdom participated intensively in cultural movements and exchanges between the Near East, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea during the first Christian centuries, right down to the 7<sup>th</sup> century. More than that, modern Ethiopia has faithfully retained some features of this cultural environment: be they religious practices, literary texts, artistic motifs or elements of material culture. The same happened well after the medieval age in other areas of the Christian Orient, of which Ethiopia has been an integral, though remote component for centuries. Yet, due to its long isolation, it is likely that archaic elements are more easily to be found in Ethiopia than in other countries.<sup>7</sup>

In the script used in the earliest Ethiopic monumental inscriptions, round letter-forms proper of soft text-carriers are more prevalent than in the comparable South-Arabian inscriptions. This seems to demonstrate that manuscript writing, probably on parchment rolls and codices – there is no evidence for the

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6 Cf. Uhlig / Bausi 2007a, 739b; Bausi 2008a, 521, n. 44.

7 Cf. Marrassini 1999, 238.



use of papyrus in Ethiopia<sup>8</sup> – was introduced in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century at the latest.<sup>9</sup> The ancient and deeply rooted practice of parchment manuscript production was certainly favoured by the dry, healthy climate of the Abyssinian highlands which makes use of chemical treatment rather unnecessary. Parchment has been the main medium for transmitting written knowledge (including documentary texts) for over 1500 years, up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In some areas it remains in use to the present day.<sup>10</sup> Since the country's Christianisation, Ethiopic manuscripts have been responsible for the diffusion and transmission of a literary *corpus* translated from Greek into Ethiopic which is instrumental to Christian practice: including the Bible with several Apocrypha and various patristic writings (theological, liturgical, hagiographic, homiletic, and monastic works). This Aksumite corpus survived in the course of time through complex processes of transmission. Some parts survived through copying, while other texts (starting in the 13<sup>th</sup> century) came down to us as translations from Arabic into Ethiopic. All these were transmitted on parchment. Interestingly, from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards copyists probably did not speak the language of the texts that they were copying.

During the obscure and scarcely documented period between the Aksumite (the 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries and beyond) and post-Aksumite ages (which began in the 12<sup>th</sup> century), written culture was affected by traumatic events with a consequent loss of whole *corpora* of texts. Besides material factors, this was probably due to changes in linguistic standards. That is, translated texts had become virtually unintelligible even to the clergy. The combined effects of linguistic change on the one hand, and both decline in literary culture and long textual transmission by copying on the other, led to extensive textual corruption. In consequence, ancient Aksumite translations were either superficially revised or transformed by complex and unexpected processes (what I will briefly present below is evidence of one such case), abandoned or even totally replaced with newer ones.<sup>11</sup> No wonder that the traditional teaching transmitted in ecclesiastical schools has sometimes no understanding of ancient texts or of the practices mentioned therein, the memory of which has definitely vanished. This past – in a way, a “classical past” rooted in the Aksumite period – can be recovered only if it is com-

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**8** The very recent description of the Four Gospels Books of Abbā Garimā by its restorer, however, includes the important remark that the binding of the first of the two manuscripts bears traces of deteriorated papyrus: and this, as far as we know, would be the first evidence for papyrus as book material in Ethiopia, cf. Capon 2008, 7; Mercier 2009, 112; Bausi 2011a.

**9** Cf. Cohen 1931, 131; on palaeography, cf. also Grohmann 1915; Drewes 1955; Schneider 1983; 1986; 1995; Uhlig 1988; 1990; Getatchew Haile 1996; Lusini 1999a; Bausi 2004a; 2008a; Böll 2007; Uhlig / Bausi 2007b. Cf. also Bausi / Nosnitsin 2014.

**10** Cf. Mellors / Parsons 2002a; 2002b; 2003.

**11** Cf. Bausi 2005a; 2005b; 2006a; 2006b; 2006c.

pared with its late antique original context; also, it is better understood if contrasted against other ancient Christian and Christian oriental traditions – for both of which, in turn, the contribution of Ethiopian studies may be of extraordinary importance.

It would not make sense to study Ethiopic manuscripts without considering the cultural context in which they originated: namely that of Late Antiquity and the Christian East. The myth that Ethiopian Studies is a self-sufficient field and/or a minor part of African Studies has often helped to obscure one essential truth: that the mere existence of its manuscript tradition clearly shows that Ethiopian civilization was deeply influenced by Mediterranean, Byzantine and Near Eastern cultures. The preservation of ancient techniques and their application by modern copyists, however, have attracted the attention of only a few scholars.<sup>12</sup> Notwithstanding some recent initiatives, Ethiopic manuscripts have not yet become a subject of codicological study within the frame of modern “manuscript archaeology”,<sup>13</sup> nor have they been properly examined from a comparative or quantitative (chronological distribution, format, size typologies etc.) perspective.

Present-day manuscript production practices, even those showing features traceable to medieval times, do not have any absolute or paradigmatic value, nor can they be mechanically interpreted as reflecting ancient traditional practices. This does not, however, mean that no archaic features were retained in manuscript production and other aspects of Ethiopian social and religious life. Manuscript production simply underwent its own – mainly internal – development over time. This can be illustrated by the following examples.

It is commonly said that one and the same person took care of all phases of manuscript production, from parchment preparation to writing and binding; something observed nowadays, and still customarily taught in a few surviving traditional schools. However, we have evidence for other modes of book-production as well. The Gə‘əz term *berhānnā*, probably a pseudo-etymological spelling, as in Amharic, for the original *berānnā*, specifically means ‘parchment’.<sup>14</sup> The colophon of a manuscript in Pistoia’s Biblioteca Forteguerriana, Martini etiop. 5, fol. 195rb, which dates to the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (1437/1438) during the reign of King Zar’a Yā’qob (1434–1468) and belongs to a series of monumental Biblical “Octateuchs” (i.e. Genesis, Leviticus, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy,

<sup>12</sup> A short documentary has also been produced in 2001, cf. Sobania / Silverman 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Maniaci 2002; Agati 2003; 2009; Géhin 2005. Cf. now Balicka-Witakowska / Bausi / Bosc-Tiessé / Nosnitsin 2014.

<sup>14</sup> The term is etymologically unclear: either from \**brh* ‘be light, be clear’, or (more likely) from Latin *membrana*, through Greek μεμβράνα.

Joshua, Judges and Ruth) of large size (195 foll., 2 cols., 465 × 350 mm), offers an interesting piece of evidence. The colophon reads:<sup>15</sup>

The Book of Ruth from the Octateuch has been finished. And this book was written in the ninetyeth year of Mercy: it was started in the month of Yakkātīt and finished in the month of Naḥāsī, [while] our King [was] Zar’a Yā’qob and our Metropolitan ‘abbā Bartalomēwos. It was Our Father Gabramāryām who had it written: let God write his name on the golden pillar by a bejewelled pen in the Heavenly Jerusalem with all his [spiritual] sons for ever and ever. Amen. Malka Šēdēq wrote the Book of Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua, while I myself, Pāwlos, wrote the other [books]. If we added or omitted anything, either wittingly or not, forgive and bless us for ever and ever. Amen. And bless the makers of parchment, because they laboured much.

The colophon demonstrates that in this case the ‘parchment makers’, *sarāḥta berānnā*, were definitely distinct from the copyists, who are mentioned by their names, Malka Šēdēk and Pāwlos. Moreover, the making of the book was “team work”, because at least two copyists took part in it. They probably worked at the same time, as can be guessed from a codicological analysis of the manuscript: Malka Šēdēq’s portion of the text (Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua, on foll. 93–173) is written on a separate set of quires and the whole work took no longer than six/seven months. On the other hand, Pāwlos is mentioned again in a caption (on fol. 5v) as the artist of an illustration that shows Moses with Joshua and Aron receiving the Tablets of the Law: although we do not know how frequent such illuminations were at the time, copyist-painters are not at all frequent today.<sup>16</sup>

Another example of manuscript production by “team” is the long *subscriptio* (fol. 574v), with a colophon to a second, even more monumental manuscript (576 foll., 3 cols., mm 489 × 390) preserved in the monastery of Dabra Bizan (Eritrea). The manuscript, which contains the so-called *81 Canonical Books* (the whole Bible plus apocryphal and canonico-liturgical writings) is dated to the reign of King ’Eskender (1478–1494) at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (1491/1492). As the abbot Tawalda Madḥen, who donated the manuscript to the monastic community, declares in the long and elaborated *subscriptio*:<sup>17</sup>

We have entrusted this book to the Lord, to Mary his mother and to all the angelical and human ranks, to all our forefathers, living and dead, and to this church, so that they should preserve it. May this word of the Lord preserve this church and this community from the burning of fire, from earthquake, from the assault of the enemy, from the stirring of wind,

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Fiacadori 1993, 162–163; description and bibliography also in Lusini 2002, 161–163, with erroneous shelfmark «Ms. Martini etiop. n. 2 (= Zanutto n. 5)»; cf. also Bausi 2008a, 522, n. 49.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Uhlig / Bausi 2007a, 739b; Bausi 2008a, 522.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Bausi 1997, 34–39, manuscript no. 6; the quotation on p. 36 [tr.], and p. 39 [text].

from lightning and thunder, and from every fraudulence of the enemy. As to this book, it is a source of pride, and [no similar one] is found anywhere else. Preserve it carefully and respectfully.

The statement of the abbot makes it clear that the completion of this book was important for two reasons: its monumentality visibly represented the richness and power of the community as well as its devotion and loyalty to the religious faith. In this respect, the presence in the manuscript of the apocryphal and canonico-liturgical writings besides the Bible has its own specific importance. By virtue of having realised the book, the abbot feels entitled to ask for a particular intercession in favour of the monastery. In this case, the manuscript displays the patronage of the monastic community and attests to its ideological identity.

The third case shows how dogmatic, monastic, and political controversies are sometimes reflected in centuries-old manuscripts. At the same monastery of Dabra Bizan, a wonderful 15<sup>th</sup>-century *Maṣḥafa berhān* ('Book of the light') has been preserved. The work is a compilation of doctrinal and historical materials written on the initiative of King Zar'a Yā'qob and primarily intended to settle the violent monastic disputes in the course of which Dabra Bizan sided with the party opposed to the King.<sup>18</sup> A note in the manuscript states that the codex was donated by the King to Pētros, the community's future abbot, on the occasion of his visit to the royal court in Sēwā in the year 1457/1458 (fol. 271va):<sup>19</sup>

This book is the *Maṣḥafa berhān* donated by our King Zar'a Yā'qob to Dabra Bizan when Our Father Pētros descended from the land of Sēwā, having taken this book in the year of Mercy 110. May he write in the Heavenly Jerusalem the name of Our Father Pētros, shepherd of the flock. For ever. Amen.

As we have it now, some specific portions of the historical narrative in the work (a sort of "official" history of the recent past) have however been censored, having been washed away and erased from the codex, no doubt on the initiative of some rebellious monks.

The passion of the Ethiopian saints for books is a hagiographic commonplace, and certainly reflects their holy devotion to the Holy Scriptures and to the books of Divinity.<sup>20</sup> Some of them, however, seem to go slightly further, being animated by a special bibliophily: this is the case of some saints of the house of

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Getatchew Haile 2003; 2013; Derat 2005a.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Bausi 1997, 25–34, manuscript no. 6, figs. 1–8; the note on p. 28 [tr.], and p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Bausi 1992, 41–46; for Dabra Ḥayq 'Eṣṭifānos – on which, cf. also Derat 2005b – cf. Bausi 2006b, 538.

’Ēwoṣṭātēwos (ca. 1273–1352),<sup>21</sup> but also of Baṣalota Mikā’el, a 14<sup>th</sup>-century saint<sup>22</sup> who, according to his *Gadl* ([Spiritual] Combat), wandered among monasteries in search for books:

First he arrived at Makāna Dāmmo and remained there reading the books of the New and of the Old [Testament]; he also studied their interpretation with intellectual eagerness: so that the skin of his tongue fell off, like the sheath of a knife; but he did not abandon his reading because of this. Then he departed and arrived at the house of ’abbā Maṭā’: he received the benediction of the blessed Libānos and remained a few days being vigilant in the reading of books. Then he left and arrived at Makāna Qefryā, and from there he left to Makāna Qw’a’t, from Makāna Qw’a’t to Makāna Ba’altabēhat, from Makāna Ba’altabēhat to Makāna Maqalē, from Makāna Maqalē to Makāna Gēfē by Gabra Nāzrawi, his beloved. And wherever he arrived, he built a cell for himself and stayed up day and night reading the Scriptures: he supplicated the Lord in fasts and in prayer so that He might reveal the secret of their mystery. (Conti Rossini 1905, 19.22–20.3 [text], 17.26–18.5 [tr].)

### 3 Some data and the *status quaestionis*

#### 3.1 Panorama

Beginning from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, modern research has clearly distinguished various branches within the general field of manuscript studies, each with its own methodology and scope, based upon the fundamental distinction between the text and the bearer of the text.<sup>23</sup> Codicology or “manuscript archaeology” studies hand-written books as artefacts with specific reference to their material constituents and techniques of production. Manuscript illuminations and drawings are the subject of art history. Palaeography deals with the peculiarities of writing and its general development and dating (which, historically, was always the primary aim of palaeography), but also with the general “act of writing” in all its contexts and reflexes. Textual criticism or philology has refined its methods in the search for reliable criteria with which to establish the original readings of texts, taking advantage of recent developments in other fields attested, for example, by the emergence of such specific sub-disciplines as “codi-

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Fiaccadori 2005a; 2005b; Lusini 2004, 230–237; Tedros Abraha 2009, 188–189.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Samuel Wolde Yohannes / Nosnitsin 2003 (the reference on p. 494b to manuscript EML no. 1843 is to be corrected into EML no. 2134).

<sup>23</sup> The assertion that these areas of research should be subsumed in a single discipline of “manuscript studies”, though not unheard-of, certainly has a radical edge today, and needs justification.

cological stemmatics” or “material philology”.<sup>24</sup> These new fields of research are concerned with establishing the links between manuscripts and the texts they transmit. They also trace the history of each single manuscript, its material structure and/or the influence particular copies may have exerted within a single textual tradition. So far these recent disciplinary subdivisions have seldom been applied in Ethiopian manuscripts studies.

### 3.2 Number of manuscripts

Among basic issues that still need definitive assessment is the question of the total number of manuscripts, both inside and outside Ethiopia and Eritrea. The exact number of Ethiopic manuscripts in the Ethio-Eritrean region is not known. The estimated figure of ca. 200,000 (excluding scrolls) seems realistic and cannot be dramatically reduced if one considers the minimum number of manuscripts necessary for every church to be able to carry on its normal religious and liturgical practice (the estimated number of parishes ranges from at least 13,000 to 32,350). Large manuscript collections are often preserved in monastic libraries, especially in the still understudied Tegray churches and monasteries that formed the “cradle” of Christian civilization in Ethiopia.<sup>25</sup>

The number of manuscripts abroad may run to several thousand. Most are catalogued. The four biggest collections in Europe are the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Città del Vaticano), the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris), the British Library (London), and the Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Berlin). The Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (also the first to have been catalogued) has well over one thousand (about 1,082) catalogued manuscripts plus a number of still uncatalogued collections including many items each. The Bibliothèque nationale de France has over one thousand manuscripts and scrolls. The British Library (the first to have been catalogued according to modern standards in 1848) has at present at least 624 manuscripts. The Berlin

<sup>24</sup> Cf., e.g., Cavallo 1998; Gonçalves 1998; Zufferey 1998; Pecere 1998; Del Corso 2007. For one of the many essays on the “digital philology” cf. Ciula / Stella 2007. Cf. also Bausi et al. 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. for details Bausi 1996, 14–23; 2004a, 8; 2008a, 510–515; 2009a; 2011b; Bausi / Uhlig 2007a; cf. also the important research project “Māzgābā Səəlat”, edited by Michael Gervers and Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, with an immense database at <<http://ethiopia.deeds.utoronto.ca/>>; and now the even more important projects Ethio-SPaRe led by Denis Nosnitsin <<http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/ethiostudies/ethiospare.pdf>> and “The Ethiopian Manuscript Imaging Project, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, Saint John’s University, Collegeville, MN”, led by Steve Delamarter <<http://www.hmml.org/Vivarium/sgd.htm>>. By the Ethio-SPaRe project, see now Nosnitsin 2013a; 2013b.

Library preserves 328 manuscripts and an important microfilm collection of 182 items. As far as microfilms are concerned, the collection of the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (Addis Ababa and Collegeville, Minnesota) with its 9,238 manuscripts is the most important; moreover, the first 5,000 items have been catalogued in printed form, with other manuscripts being described in an online catalogue.

### 3.3 Manuscript cataloguing

To discuss methods and the state of the art in Ethiopic manuscript cataloguing would require a paper by itself.<sup>26</sup> A full list of collections and catalogues, with minor omissions, has been compiled by Robert Beylot and Maxime Rodinson in 1995; an updated online version – not without some inconvenient elements, misunderstandings and errors – was prepared by a team of French researchers (Anaïs Wion, Marie-Laure Derat, Claire Bosc-Tiessé) in 2006.<sup>27</sup> For information on a number of collections which can be considered of minor importance only from the point of view of the number of manuscripts, old repertories (such as the wonderful bibliography by Silvio Zanutto of 1935) are still useful.<sup>28</sup> Catalogues usually reflect only a certain angle on manuscript studies. Some put more weight on philological aspects, such as description of the text, identification of its antecedents and parallels, and the manuscript's place in its textual tradition, while others focus on material or “archaeological” aspects of the manuscripts. From this perspective, a rather recent catalogue of 23 manuscripts deposited in public and private collections of the United Kingdom should be used with circumspection: though seemingly “progressive” and up to date in its detailed description of material aspects, it lacks similarly detailed description of the texts and has insufficient references to parallel versions and general repertories, with the con-

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<sup>26</sup> I devoted one to the subject on the occasion of an international workshop in Montepulciano (Siena) on the manuscripts of the Mediterranean area (Bausi 2007a, with updated bibliography); add the descriptions of two manuscripts by Gianfrancesco Lusini, in Scialabba / Palma 2007, 24–25 (manuscript no. 1, Lentini [Siracusa], Parrocchia di Sant'Alfio e Santa Maria La Cava, Biblioteca “Don Sebastiano Castro”, manuscript inv. 3373), and 72–73 (manuscript no. 26, Siracusa, Biblioteca Alagoniana, manuscript cod. XXIII); and the list of nine manuscripts in Bucarelli 2007, 20–41 (manuscripts nos. 25–33).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Beylot / Rodinson 1995; Wion / Derat / Bosc-Tiessé 2006a; 2006b, 2008; cf. Bausi 2007a, 100–104.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Simon 1931–1932; and esp. Zanutto 1932.



sequence that the description does not constitute a good basis for philological research.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.4 Oldest manuscripts

Although the introduction of Christianity in Aksum certainly implies early diffusion of manuscripts, at least for the purpose of religious services and liturgical practice, none dating to that period are as yet known. The oldest preserved manuscripts which can confidently be dated go back to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, but manuscripts survive in considerable quantity only from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Christian tradition tends to attribute the scarcity of manuscripts predating the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the destruction of Christian heritage brought about in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> by the Islamic leader Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ġāzī. The wars with Islam must seriously have affected the survival of Christian manuscripts, although the extent of the damage cannot be determined with any certainty. The intentional destruction or substitution of texts, the custom of burying manuscripts together with their owners, and poor preservation conditions in monastic libraries, have also been adduced to explain the scarcity of ancient manuscripts. The conflict with the Jesuits in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the full restoration of traditional cult in the Gondarine kingdom may also have occasioned a substantial revival of manuscript production.<sup>30</sup>

Three Four Gospels books from 'Endā 'Abbā Garimā (I, II and III) are considered to be the oldest known Ethiopian manuscripts. Their dating, however, is still uncertain and a matter of discussion: it ranges, according to different scholars, from the 7<sup>th</sup> or even the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries up to the 14<sup>th</sup>, with the earliest dating (*i.e. ante* the 7<sup>th</sup> century) supported by the style of the illuminations (Canon tables) and radiocarbon dating.<sup>31</sup> While in several cases internal evidence is provided by a colophon or a *subscriptio*, in this, as well as in other cases, the manuscripts can

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Delamarter / Demeke Berhane 2007; cf. Bausi 2007a, 104–106. Definitely much better, the new catalogue by Getatchew Haile / Melaku Terefe / Rundell / Daniel Alemu / Delamarter 2009 and Delamarter / Melaku Terefe 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Uhlig / Bausi 2007a, 739b–740b; Bausi 2008a, 518–520. The question whether more recent destructions – such as those caused by the Italian invasion and occupation in 1935–1941 – might also have played an important role has, curiously enough, remained totally unattended so far.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Leroy 1960; 1968; Macomber 1979, 1–11; Davies 1987, 293–297; Zuurmond 1989, part II, 44–52; 2001; Heldman 1993, 129–130, nos. 52–53; Mercier 2000, 36–45, with the result, respectively, of 430–650 CE and 330–540 CE for the two analysed parchment fragments; Bausi 2004b; Wechsler 2005, ix–xi; Bausi 2005d; 2008a, 549–551; Capon 2008; Mercier 2009; Bausi 2011a. The recent conference “Ethiopia and the Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity: The Garimā Gospels in the

unfortunately be dated only on the basis of palaeographic evidence, for which, however, only uncertain epigraphic parallels or art-historical features of the illustrations are available.

### 3.5 Codicology

In the absence of a specialist monograph devoted to the codicology of Ethiopic manuscripts apart from a short, but useful booklet published by Sergew Hable Selassie (1981), Ethiopian codicology is still in its infancy.<sup>32</sup> Two basic types of Ethiopic manuscripts are traditionally distinguished according to overall format, both of which are prepared on parchment according to fixed traditional procedures: a) the scroll, usually not calligraphic and almost exclusively used for magical texts and for paintings but not (as in Jewish culture) for sacred texts or large works, and b) the codex, usually with wooden binding and leather cover. Palimpsests are rarely attested; they are obtained more often by washing off the ink than by erasing. Manuscripts are almost without exception on parchment. Paper manuscripts are rare and very recent (from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> or the 20<sup>th</sup> century), apart from exceptions easily explained by the context of production. Collections of Ethiopic manuscripts copied by Ethiopian copyists for European scholars sometimes have many European paper manuscripts. Quires are normally composed of four bifolia in older manuscripts; fascicles of five bifolia seem to have prevailed since the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> centuries. “Gregory’s rule” (“flesh side on flesh side and hair side on hair side”) is consistently observed. Although dimensions and other metric data of the manuscripts (number of columns, size of the writing, width of the margins etc.) should be studied as components of the general *mise en page*, no statistical study is yet available for Ethiopic manuscripts, apart from very limited sample studies.<sup>33</sup> On this provisional basis, one can say that the dimensions of the manuscripts range from 10–12 cm to more than 40 to 50 cm in height. The most ancient manuscripts usually organize text in two columns; from the 16<sup>th</sup> century the three-column model tends to become frequent and later on prevails in large format manuscripts. As a rule, the Psalter is copied in one

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Context”, held in Oxford on 2–3 November 2013 seems to have provided further elements supporting the early date of the manuscripts I and III.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Sergew Hable Selassie 1981; Balicka-Witakowska 2007, 749a–752a; Bausi 2008a, 525–546. Cf. now the book, in Amharic, by Faqāda Šellāsē Tafarrā 2010; Nosnitsin 2012; and most of all Balicka-Witakowska / Bausi / Bosc-Tiessé / Nosnitsin 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Delamarter / Demeke Berhane 2007, ix–x, and especially Getatchew Haile / Melaku Terefe / Rundell / Daniel Alemu / Delamarter 2009, xxviii–xxx, where some useful statistics on the fascicular structure of the described manuscripts are given.

single column. Guidelines are not drawn with ink but rather with a dry point by scoring the writing surface. Paragraph marks are very simple until the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century when they become more elaborate. Geometrical ornaments and interlacing (*ḥarag*) also developed from the 14<sup>th</sup> century; this kind of ornamentation enjoyed a special revival in imperial *scriptoria* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup> Black (or dark brown, typical of the earliest manuscripts) and red inks are very common; other colours are also used, especially in ornaments; one special case of “negative” writing (black ink is erased to obtain “white” writing using the colour of the parchment) is attested in the colophon of an Octateuch, Bible House Library, Ethiop. 1, 284r.<sup>35</sup> One prevalent Ethiopian binding techniques seems to be of a specific type, technically termed “chain-sewing with two threads”. Manuscripts are usually provided with wooden covers, very often covered with ornamented leather according to traditional styles.<sup>36</sup>

A particular question concerning the material aspects of the Ethiopian manuscript book is that of ink production. Although there has been no extensive laboratory analysis, present-day practice as observed by ethnographers, as well as philological and linguistic data (*i.e.* study of terminology) would attest that metallic ink was not common in Ethiopia, whereas it began to be used and tended to prevail both in Islamic and in Christian areas of the Mediterranean world in the course of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium CE. Aksumite Ethiopic *māya ḥemmat* (‘ink’) literally means ‘water of soot’, and the earliest documentary text ever found, a feudal deed issued by King Lālibalā and dating to 1205/1209, mentions the office of *qāla ḥemmāt*, probably (if *ḥemmāt* stands for *ḥemmat*) ‘voice (or: word) of the soot’, with reference to his scribes or secretaries who read and recorded texts.<sup>37</sup> If analyses and further research will confirm these preliminary results, Ethiopian manuscript production could have preserved late antique practice through to the present day.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Balicka-Witakowska 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Cowley 1982, 71; at present, the manuscripts are preserved in the Cambridge University Library, cf. Beylot / Rodinson 2005, 46–47.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Bozzacchi 1996; Szirmai 1999, 45–50; Bartelt / Hammerschmidt 1976; Proverbio / Fiacca-dori 2004, 666, n. 3; Balicka-Witakowska 2007; Bausi 2008a, 543–546.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Conti Rossini 1901, 187.16, doc. no. 6; 2008a, 524; additional references in Bausi 2005c; 2010e.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. a first attempt by Wion 2004, 107, that confirms that Ethiopian black ink is carbon-based. On the occasion of the workshop “Digital Approaches to Manuscript Studies”, Hamburg, July 23<sup>rd</sup>–24<sup>th</sup> 2010, in the frame of the European Science Foundation Research Networking Programme “Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies” (COMSt), Steve Delamarter presented the paper “X-Ray spectroscopy and a Fourier Transform-infrared analysis of Ethiopian Inks”, providing laboratory evidence for the use of iron gall ink in an 18<sup>th</sup>-century Ethiopian manuscript.

### 3.6 Palaeography

Apart from the study of writing in the strict sense,<sup>39</sup> the modern concept of palaeography denotes both the analysis of the relationship within a single “data carrier” between texts of different status and, beside the material aspects of manuscript-making, the social context presupposed by their production and use. We have some information about how copyists in the 20<sup>th</sup>-century imperial *scriptoria* (adequately furnished with libraries and places of traditional religious education) were trained. Their education included some knowledge of Ethiopic and calligraphy. The special figures of the *dabtarās* (learned laymen who are the best bearer of traditional religious knowledge) play an important role in manuscript production, although it has been observed that copying skills are not of pivotal importance for them and other learned people of the church, writing being considered a task of lower prestige. This circumstance may also explain why autograph manuscripts are extremely rare, only beginning to emerge alongside private and official letters and documents in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The central role in the production of manuscripts was played by the monastic communities, and monasteries have also been – and in many cases still are – the main repositories. Manuscripts are rarely preserved in specially devised places (“libraries”): usually they are considered “precious objects”, and are inventoried and preserved in the same place as liturgical objects, paintings, clothes, textiles, crosses, and other paraphernalia. In some cases, manuscripts were entrusted to an *‘aqqābē maṣāḥeft*, ‘keeper of the books’, who is responsible for their care; in many cases written inventories have also been drawn up. Old lists of books (attested from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century) are normally used by scholars in order to establish the *terminus ante quem* of literary works and/or the relative degree of interest of monastic communities towards them.<sup>40</sup> Inventories of items and books often appear as *additiones* (“additional notes”), on blank pages and/or in spaces not completely used up by the text, at the beginning or more usually at the end of the manuscripts. Unlike the colophon, these notes of various types (personal and historical records; sentences and judgements on controversies; lists of important people, saints, foreign words, and months; prayers and short hymns; calendric remarks; *fatina ber*’, ‘pen trials’) do not directly refer to the main manuscript text. The practice of *additiones* may be considered very old, as we find such notes (almost contemporary with their production) even in the most ancient manuscripts. The Bible (particularly the Four Gospels, *Wangēla warq*, ‘Golden Gospel’) and manuscripts of the *Gadl* (‘Spiritual Combat’) of the founder of a monastic

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. bibliography above.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Bausi 1996, 20–21; 2008a, 546–547.

community are frequently found to include documents of special interest, such as feudal deeds attesting benefits, historical records etc. In some cases, fascicles containing important feudal deeds are rebound together (e.g., in the “Golden Gospel” of Dabra Libānos of Šemazānā, in this case, together with a recent copy of the same deeds).<sup>41</sup>

### 3.7 Philology

The analysis of the scribes’ attitude towards their texts and the understanding of the typology of textual transmission may have some important implications for editorial methodology today. All the great scholars in Ethiopian Studies have *also* been editors of texts, though (with few exceptions) not necessarily up-to-date with, or sensitive to, the questions of text-critical method involved in that work.<sup>42</sup>

In general, with some unavoidable simplifications, one can say that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanists and Classical philologists adopted the methods developed by earlier New Testament editors, and brought to completion the slow ongoing evolution towards a “progressive” critical reconstructive method. This method, often called the “Lachmannian” approach, comprises the following stages: a) a complete survey of all the direct and indirect witnesses to the text under examination (*recensio*); b) the identification of their genealogical relationship established on the basis of conjunctive errors (*Leitfehler*); c) the reconstruction of an original or archetype text, using the majority reading of the manuscript families; d) a critical edition of what is believed to be a hypothetical reconstruction of the original text by the editor.<sup>43</sup> As is well known, the Romanist Joseph Bédier (once a pupil of Gaston Paris) advanced a drastic criticism of the reconstructive method. According to him, an overwhelming majority of the pub-

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<sup>41</sup> Bausi 1996; 1997; 1998a; Lusini 1999b; exhaustive bibliography can be found in Bausi / Dore / Taddia 2001, 155–165; Bausi 2004a, 19–21; 2006d, 102–105; 2007b, 81, n. 4; further additions in Bausi 2010e. Cf. now also Nosnitsin 2007; Derat 2009, 2010; Bosc-Tiessé 2009, 2010; Wion 2009; Crummey 2011; Deresse Ayenachew 2011; Wion 2011a; 2011b; Wion / Bertrand 2011; Bosc-Tiessé / Derat 2011; Kropp 2011a; 2011b; Fiaccadori 2012; Wion 2012, *passim*; Kropp 2012; 2013; Nosnitsin 2013c; Fiaccadori 2014.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. details in Bausi 2006a; 2008b; 2010a; for the “normalization” of Ethiopian Studies, cf. Marrassini 1986, 172–173; 1993, 4–6. Paolo Marrassini is responsible for marking a new philological trend in Ethiopian Studies in a number of pathbreaking contributions: Marrassini 1981; 1987; 1992; 1996; 2000; 2003a; 2008a, 268–269, 272–273; 2008b; 2009; cf. also Lusini 2005; Shiferaw Bekele 2008; useful considerations are to be found also in Mantel-Niečko 1987.

<sup>43</sup> Any critical edition should of course distinguish clearly between manuscript tradition and critically established text – what has been called, e.g., “Befund” and “Bearbeitung” by Hahn 2001, 52.

lished *stemmata codicum*, or genealogical branches, of the manuscripts were two branched (*silva portentosa*! ‘a most unnatural branching’, as he put it). Bédier concluded that selection of preferred variants was a matter of personal judgment, and that the reduction of genealogical branches to binary oppositions was instrumental in making editorial choice more subjective. Moreover, such genealogical reconstructions must, he concluded, have produced editions containing texts that had never existed. From 1913 on, Bédier proposed and formalized what he termed the “base manuscript” method.<sup>44</sup> This involved publishing the text of a single selected manuscript, considered by the editor the best, and calling upon the remaining manuscripts only where they provide better readings of what from the editor’s point of view are problematic passages.

In reaction to Bédier, the Classical philologists Giorgio Pasquali (following Paul Maas, who had remained largely unaffected by Bédier’s ideas), his pupil Sebastiano Timpanaro and the Romanist Gianfranco Contini reasserted the importance of philological reconstruction.<sup>45</sup> In fact, there is no alternative to the modern reconstructive (or so-called “Neo-Lachmannian”) method, unless “transcribing” is understood as editing.<sup>46</sup> In Bédier’s view, one negative consequence of this method would be that every new edition would have a different text. To this criticism, G. Contini replied:

The likely absence of stable readings is for Bédier a vice, the complaint against which, though fundamental, is not as a point salient enough: continuous dynamic improvement cannot be viewed as something that is not a positive quality. This progressive approximation to the truth, a truth that is, so to speak, fractional in comparison with the presumed inherent truth of each single witness, a truth that involves a diminution of error, seems to represent a method worthy of the name of science.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Already known, but not usually extensively practiced, even before the development of the Lachmannian method – when the correction of an already edited texts (‘vulgata’) by eventually using additional manuscripts was the normal practice, cf. Timpanaro 2005 – under the name of “*codex optimus* ‘best manuscript’”, or *codex vetustissimus* “‘most ancient manuscript’ method”.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. the invaluable “reader in the history of Philology” by Stussi 2006, esp. his “Introduction” (7–45) and selected writings on text-critical methodology by Gaston Paris, Joseph Bédier, Alberto Varvaro, Gianfranco Contini, Cesare Segre, Sebastiano Timpanaro, Alfredo Stussi, Neil Harris, Andrea Bozzi (47–232) with updated bibliography (235–240); cf. also the recent English translation of Timpanaro 2005, to be read together with Fiesoli 2000.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Milikowski 1999, 147–148; cf. also Reeve 2000, 197.

<sup>47</sup> “L’assenza eventuale di lezione stabile è un vizio per Bédier, della cui denuncia è questo un punto portante, non abbastanza rilevato; ma il continuo miglioramento dinamico non si vede come non sia una qualità positiva. Questa marcia di avvicinamento alla verità, una verità per così dire frazionaria in opposizione alla verità presuntamente organica dei singoli testimoni, una verità come diminuzione di errore, sembra un procedimento degno della scienza”. Cf. Contini

To my knowledge, there has been much less work on the history of Islamic manuscripts philology.<sup>48</sup> With regard to other Oriental traditions, I am not aware of detailed studies in the history of editorial technique. But there is, as far as I can see, much to be learned for example from Indic philology.<sup>49</sup>

As far as Ethiopic and other Christian Oriental texts are concerned, one might reasonably ask whether the method of the “base manuscript”<sup>50</sup> (still

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1977, 963b; repr. in Contini 1986 [with a “Postilla 1985” on pp. 64–67], 3–63, esp. p. 33; repr. in Contini 2007, I, 3–62, esp. p. 30; again in Contini 2014, 39.

**48** Cf. some references in Marrassini 1987, 348–349; 2007; Bausi 2006a, 544; 2008b, 22–24. The recent, comprehensive volume by Pfeiffer / Kropp 2007, is useful to get an overall idea of the “state of the art”, even though many of the contributors do not really focus on the methodology of textual criticism, whereas those who do with a few exceptions (Peacock 2007; Berschin 2007; Kleinlogel 2007), seem to go little further than the paradigmatic and rather disappointing conclusions expressed by Witkam 1988, who rightly criticized the mechanical application of stemmatic methodology to “Middle Eastern” literary traditions (Arabic, Persian, Turkish), yet totally ignored the fact that Classical and Romance philologists (cf. Pasquali 1954 and Contini 2007) developing the so-called “neo-Lachmannian” approach have provided a refined revision of mechanical stemmatic methodology, and that the seemingly specific problems troubling editors of “Middle Eastern” texts which are listed by Witkam (“The ‘unique’ manuscript”, “The edition of texts preserved in numerous manuscripts”, etc.) are almost exactly the same (the only exception being “The edition of the *Qurʾān*”) as those usually debated by Romance philologists; in a way, Endress’s 1982, 274 statement (“Auch die von Paul Maas: *Textkritik* ... erarbeiteten Grundsätze sollen bei der Edition arabischer Handschriften mehr Beachtung finden”), still makes sense: the reconstructive methodology should be considered insufficient only *after* attempts to apply it have been fully exhausted. For more nuanced position, see now Witkam 2013; and more in general, Bausi et al. 2014.

**49** Cf. Bharati 1988; Jha 1993; various contributions in Gärtner / Krummacker 2000; Thaker 2002; cf. also for further references the very interesting and exemplary article by Isaacson 2009.

**50** For a short survey and critical evaluation of recently edited Ethiopic texts, cf. Bausi 2006a, 544–546; 2008b, 24–28; 2010f; Marrassini 2009. The survey could be easily expanded: e.g., one can note that Getatchew Haile 1982, 69, even if almost unwittingly, appreciably applies *eliminatio codicum descriptorum* to justify the use of a unique base-manuscript (EMML no. 6275); on the contrary, Gori 2001, 472 (probably on the initiative of the series editor Lanfranco Ricci), deals with the unique manuscript witness to the text he is publishing as if it were the autograph, even though it is not (“Il criterio fondamentale che ci ha costantemente guidato nella nostra edizione è quello della massima aderenza alla forma e al contenuto del manoscritto della *Silloge*. Di quest’ultimo, abbiamo dunque rispettato con la scrupolosa cura le forme grafiche peculiari, anche quando errate ortograficamente, e le scelte morfologiche e sintattiche dell’autore, anche se sbagliate grammaticalmente”) (“The fundamental principle which we have constantly followed in our edition is that of most adherence to form and contents of the manuscript of the *Sylloge*. Of the latter, we have therefore scrupulously respected the peculiar graphic forms, even where their orthography was manifestly wrong, and the morphological and syntactical choices of the author, although grammatically erroneous”); Gori 2003, 75, states that: “Data la relativa nitidezza della grafia in cui è stato scritto il testo dallo scriba Rāda Asrass, e la non grande difficoltà di lettura



largely accepted in these circles and seen by Alphonse Dain as an antiphilological concept<sup>51</sup>), continues to be practiced by force of habit, or, following the more recent critical rethinking of the reconstructive method, is justified by purported special characteristics of the Ethiopic textual traditions themselves. But although the peculiarities of the Ethiopic textual traditions have yet to be adequately described, and better editions are needed to accomplish this task, we still must face the question which of the two critical methods should be employed for editing the texts. The “base manuscript” method is by “anti-reconstructionists” in several fields justified by intrinsic, culture-specific reasons.<sup>52</sup> I will now try to discuss which method is best justified by the features specific to the Ethiopian textual tradition.

Leaving aside the distinction – in my opinion, a fundamental one – between texts of Aksumite time on the one hand, and those of the medieval period which developed in a cultural environment which remained more or less homogeneous down to the present day on the other, a point worthy of attention is the degree of freedom the copyist allowed himself in copying the text. A high degree of freedom would lead to “fluidity”, “variation” or “instability” and make the restoration and the reconstruction of the text an impossible or simply a meaningless task.

In fact, some editors typically oppose the reconstructive methodology with an empirical procedure based on “common sense”. Some also support their own sceptical attitude towards reconstructive philology by quoting “internal evidences”, like, e.g., the following exemplary passage from the Amharic *andemtā* (Amharic commentary) on *Maṣḥafa Qeddāsē*, ‘Book of the Mass’, with reference to the Ethiopic (Ge’ez) text:

*maṣḥaf meṣṭir yetṭanaqqaqāl enḡi andennā bezu, sētennā wand, ruqennā qerb ayṭṭanaqqaqem*  
 (“the book takes care of the deep sense [*meṣṭir*]; on the contrary it does not take care of singular and plural, masculine and feminine, far away and near”). (Garimā 1925/1926, 12b.)<sup>53</sup>

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che essa presenta, non si è ritenuto necessario ritrascrivere con mezzi informatici il contenuto del manoscritto, ciò che avrebbe provocato, per altro, oltre che un notevole dispendio di energie e di tempo, anche il rischio di introdurre degli errori involontari” (“In consideration of the relative clearness of the handwriting of the scribe Rāda Asrass, and of the fact that it is easily readable, we have not considered necessary to transcribe by informatic devices the contents of the manuscript, which could have caused, among other things, besides the considerable waste of time and energy, the insertion of unintentional errors”). The latter statement is quite disconcerting: if the principle were consistently applied, no critical text could in fact ever be printed; for similar approaches, cf. detailed references in my contributions quoted above.

51 Dain 1964, 171, “un concept antiphilologique”.

52 Cf. Reeve 2000, 197; Bausi 2006a, 546–548.

53 Quoted by Tedros Abraha 2007, 120, n. 9. Tedros Abraha is a very active present-day scholar and editor of Ethiopic texts, cf. Tedros Abraha 2001; 2004; 2007; 2009; cf. also Bausi 2010f.

If this attitude was consistently present in older times, they say – a fact still to be verified, notwithstanding the statements of some authors who mainly refer to the observation of present day practice<sup>54</sup> – Ethiopic textual transmission must have been “fluid”; and any attempts at a critical reconstruction of textual traditions, at least in their minor details, would be futile.

A closer examination of another quotation from the *andemtā* commentary on the Pauline Epistles, *Letter to the Romans* 5,2,<sup>55</sup> however, reveals how ambiguous and complex the attitude of traditional Ethiopian scholars really is:

*maṣḥaf meštir biṭanaqqeq enḡi* (“although the book takes care of the deep sense [*meštir*]”) *zayebē ayṭanaqqeqemennā* (“on the other hand, it does not take care of the expression [*zayebē*]”): “*enta bātti qomna*” *belo* (“after having said *enta bātti qomna* [‘in which we have stood’]”) “*we’etu mekhena*” *ala* (“he said *we’etu mekhena* [‘that [[masc.]] is our boast’]”); *yeččewem mammakiyāččen nāt* (“and this [[fem.]] is [[fem.]] our boast”) “*wawe’etu mekhena*” *bil* (“if it says *wawe’etu mekhena* [‘and that [[masc.]] is our boast’]”), *yekawem mammakiyāččen naw* (“and this [masc.] is our boast”). (Maḥari Terfē 1955/1956, 70.)

The commentary might not appear perfectly clear, but what is to note here is that some phrases which are identical in contents, only differ in grammatical gender. Although this variance does not affect the sense at all, the variant phrases have been listed one after the other, collected in the *andemtā* commentary text as attesting *different utterances* which have been considered worth recording (typically in the style of the oral commentary, as usually happens in the *andemtā*):

after having said “in which we have stood”, he said “that [[masc.]] is our boast”, “and this [[fem.]] is [[fem.]] our boast”, if it says “and that [[masc.]] is our boast”, “and this [masc.] is our boast”.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Heyer 1970, 143: “To be able to keep in mind not only the sacred text but the *Tergum* of the Fathers is considered more honourable... If the sacred text, when it is being read aloud, deviates from the way it is in the Mamher’s memory, he will intervene and correct the Ge’ez text from his memory. What the Mamher knows by heart is of greater value than all that is written”. I myself have witnessed to the application of such a principle while visiting Eritrean monasteries.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. δι’ οὗ καὶ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχίκαμεν [τῇ πίστει] εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην ἐν ᾗ ἐστήκαμεν, καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ; “Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God”; *zaba’enti’ahu tamarāḥna westa zātti ṣaggāhu ’enta bātti qomna wawe’etu mekhena wabātti nesseffo sebḥata* ‘Egzi’abeḥēr, cf. Tedros Abraha 2001, 82.

The modern critical edition of the *Letter to the Romans* and of its Amharic *andemtā* commentary<sup>56</sup> reproduces as its base text the same modern edition printed in 1948 (Maḥari Terfē 1955/1956). Yet the editor's Italian translation reads<sup>57</sup>:

Il libro sta ben attento al contenuto profondo, ma non al testo; dopo aver detto «*sulla quale stiamo*» c'è infatti da aggiungere «*è il nostro vanto*». (Tedros Abraha 2001, 541.)

("The book is preoccupied with deep meaning, but not with the text; after having said «*on which we stand*», it must be added<sup>58</sup> «*it is our own boast*»").

As it appears, the Italian translation omits the second part of the Amharic text – seemingly, a repetition – which is different only as far as the grammatical gender (*yeččewem* [fem.] versus *yeḵawem* [masc.]) is concerned. Indeed, the traditional Ethiopian scholar who first edited the printed *andemtā* text thought it necessary to give an account of the variation and was more sensitive to the gender distinction than the modern European scholar and translator. The practice demonstrates that traditional Ethiopian textual scholars can be, as it seems, attentive also to very minor, purely formal details, like variations of grammatical gender, which are also considered, recorded and included in the commentary text, even though they do not actually affect the sense.

Another example useful when we consider the attitudes of traditional copyists to their texts can be drawn from the manuscript tradition of the *Qalēmenṭos*, the seven-book *Revelation of Peter to Clement*, certainly translated from an Arabic *Vorlage* probably in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>59</sup> I have extensively collated twelve manuscript witnesses of the text and tried to sketch a *stemma codicum* (see

56 Cf. Tedros Abraha 2001, 267 [text], and 541 [tr.], nn. 13–14, also with reference to the passage by Heyer 1970, 143.

57 Cf. Tedros Abraha 2001, 541, with n. 14: "Il testo su cui il commentario si basa ha omissso «*è il nostro vanto/la nostra gloria*»; il commento vuole riparare. È da notare la singolarità del principio: «la disattenzione può essere perdonata al testo ma non al commento». Per l'interprete etiope sarebbe blasfemo dire, «il testo è monco, corrotto» o cose simili, quindi si fa uso di circonlocuzioni onde trovare una via d'uscita dalle problematiche testuali" ("The text on which the commentary is based has omitted «*it is our boast/our glory*»; the commentary intends to amend it. The peculiarity of the principle must be noted: «the slip can be excused in the text but not in the commentary». The interpreter would consider it blasphemous to say «the text is mutilous, corrupt» or similarly, therefore circumlocutions are used in order to find a way out of textual problems").

58 In fact, the editor seems to have misunderstood the omographs *ala*, "he said", for *alla*, "there is", because he translates, *ibid.*: "c'è infatti da aggiungere".

59 Cf. Bausi 2006e; 2010b.

Figure 1).<sup>60</sup> Manuscripts *F* and *T* belong in the main branch  $\gamma$  (one of the three subarchetypes) and immediately descend from a common antecedent  $\tau$ , which also fits in well with their geographical provenance, as both were written in the town of Ankobar. Manuscript *G*, belonging in the main branch  $\beta$ , is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century copy in a paper exercise book,<sup>61</sup> made originally by an Ethiopian scholar for his personal use (when microfilmed it belonged in the private library of *mamher* Šemrata Ab Qašālā, Dasē, Wallo), but which bears marginal and supralinear annotations that can be identified as  $G^2$  readings. These annotations belong to a hand, different from the original copyist's, which apparently corrected the text of *G* according to the readings of  $\varphi$ , the common antecedent of both *F* and  $G^2$ . It is important that the extensive marginal and supralinear notes and corrections in  $G^2$  not only deal with large omissions or major textual variations, but also with minor ones (such as slightly different, yet actually equivalent, syntactical constructions, or synonymical variant readings and the like) that do not affect the fundamental meaning of the text. The scope of this paper will not allow me to expand on this in more detail. Instead, I will elaborate on how variant readings can reveal the real attitude of the copyists.

A passage in the second book of the *Qalēmentos* states that “the Devil deceives Adam”: all the manuscripts have the same text (*Diyābelos yāseḥ(h)eto la-ʾAddām*), except for manuscripts *F* and  $G^2$  which have “the Devil deceives *the world and* Adam” (*Diyābelos yāseḥ(h)eto la-ʾālam wa-la-ʾAddām*), “*the world and*” being in manuscript *G* a supralinear reading of  $G^2$ . Both the majority text and the variant reading of manuscripts *F* and  $G^2$  give a possible text, but the point is not that of ascertaining which is the primary or original reading (according to the general *stemma*, it is no doubt the shorter one). As in hundreds, if not thousands, of other cases, even in this one the second scribe of the manuscript *G* who wrote the marginal and supralinear text  $G^2$  verified and established his reading by comparison of the *G* text with an unknown manuscript source depen-

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Bausi 2006e, where a detailed description of the manuscript tradition is given. The *stemma codicum* may be summarized as follows: from archetype  $\Omega$  three branches stem through three distinct subarchetypes:  $\alpha$ , independent witnesses: mss. *A* and *B*;  $\beta$ , witness: ms. *K* and sub-subarchetype  $\delta$ , from which mss. *D* and *G* stem in turn; and  $\gamma$ , from which mss. *S C E* and sub-subarchetypes  $\pi$  and  $\tau$  directly stem: in turn, from  $\pi$  mss. *P* and *V* stem, and from  $\tau$  ms. *T* and a sub-sub-subarchetype  $\varphi$ ; finally, ms. *F* is derived from  $\varphi$ . The reason why  $\varphi$  (a seemingly unnecessary intermediary between  $\tau$  and *F*) needs to be postulated will become clear in a while (s. below). Only manuscripts *F* (EMML no. 2147), *G* (EMML no. 4857) and *T* (Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek, M. aeth. 1 = M. a. IX 1) will be considered here.

<sup>61</sup> This clearly appears from the microfilm of the manuscript, which I have examined, but it is not noted in the printed catalogue where the manuscript is described, cf. Getatchew Haile 1993, 338.

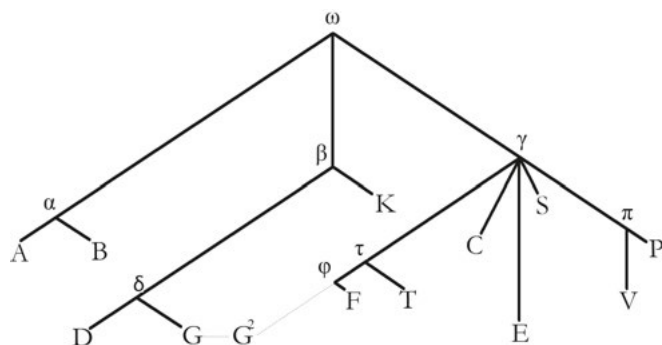


Fig. 1: *Stemma codicum* of the *Qalēmēntos*.

dent upon the antecedent  $\phi$ , from which *F* and  $G^2$  derive.<sup>62</sup> But it is important to note that the second hand  $G^2$ , far from attempting at *revising* and *correcting* the text, only intended to *collate* it extensively. The copyist or scholar responsible for the  $G^2$  readings was probably interested in recording and amassing variants. We have seen above that the traditional Ethiopian scholar who edited the printed *andemtā* text gave account in detail even of gender variations which did not affect the meaning: the same did here the copyist of  $G^2$  with his annotations, according to the very same methodological principle which has given birth to the *andemtā* commentaries.

This example shows that mediaeval Ethiopian scribes, much like their European brethren, used multiple textual sources (so-called “contamination”). It is also instructive from the point of view of the history of the textual transmission in the proper philological sense. Ethiopian manuscript transmission is on the whole stable, and the textual tradition of each single text can be established on the basis of reconstructive principles. Scribes do not *systematically* change the received text *by their own judgement*, neither do they *systematically* correct its errors, although this may in some cases happen, of course.<sup>63</sup> In the present case,

<sup>62</sup> The fact that even manuscript *T* does not have the small addition (as in other occurrences) demonstrates that the manuscript source is  $\phi$ , not  $\tau$ : cf. above the description of the *stemma codicum*.

<sup>63</sup> According to Zuurmond 1989, part I, 39-40 (“Some 500 Ethiopic Gospel manuscripts are known today. Only rarely one of them is identical with another for more than a couple of verses. By far the largest number of variant readings obviously stems from internal corruption. It is hardly exaggerated to say that every Ethiopian scribe in his own way is an ‘Editor’. The average Ethiopian scribe must almost permanently have mixed the text he was copying with the text as he had it in mind, or even with the text of another manuscript to which he had immediate

the copyist of *G*<sup>2</sup> simply collates the text and amasses variants, yet, he does not try to establish the correct text. Ethiopian copyists *usually* accepted and tolerated even extremely corrupt texts,<sup>64</sup> which is consistent with the conception of an average copyist as not necessarily a man of learning.<sup>65</sup> This, I think, opens the way not only for the application of mechanical text-critical reconstructive methodology, but also to a better understanding of how written culture was transmitted in traditional Ethiopia.

## 4 A case study: The Aksumite Collection

I have devoted myself for some years to a research project which aims to recover an older layer of the Ethiopic literature that dates back probably to the Aksumite age. The targeted texts are those multi-textual works that are likely to retain Aksumite texts translated from a Greek *Vorlage*, such as the so-called *Sinodos* (or *Senodos*),<sup>66</sup> a *corpus canonum* of canonico-liturgical character, and hagiographic collections. This research has led to editions of the Ethiopic versions of the *Epistle* 70 by St. Cyprian of Carthage, the *Acts of Phileas* (largely corresponding to the Greek text on P. Chester Beatty Library XV, one of the two papyrus witnesses known so far, the latter being P. Bodmer XX), the *Teaching of the 318 Nicene Fathers on the right faith and the monastic life*, the *Canonical answers* by Peter of Alexandria.<sup>67</sup> While this research was being conducted in 1999, I was asked to prepare a description of a manuscript recently found which looked very old and contained canonical texts (Figure 2). The description was prepared at once, but

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access"). This statement seems exaggerated, and certainly not true for most of the non-Biblical textual traditions.

<sup>64</sup> It should be obviously better investigated, following the stimulating suggestion of the anonymous editorial reviewer, "How does it compare with other traditions? Is it a function of the perceived authority of the text, or of the poor skills of the copyist?" But this cannot be the task of an overview paper like this, in the given conditions of philology of Ethiopic texts. Yet I fully agree with the general statements that "the value assigned to particular classes/genres of religious literature (Bible; commentary; other genres) might help to establish how social attitudes to/use of texts may have affected copyists' behaviour", and that "'variation' itself is a complex phenomenon with different causes in different textual traditions depending on social factors and the ways in which texts are generated/regenerated and used".

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Bausi 2008a, 526–530.

<sup>66</sup> Exactly so, not '*Synodus*': *Sinodos* (or *Senodos*) is the transcription of the Ethiopic word; cf. Bausi 2010c.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Bausi 1998b; 2002; 2004c; 2005e; 2006f; for the *Acts of Phileas* cf. now Schenke 2010a; 2010b; Bausi 2010g; 2014.

the study of the texts was troubled by a series of problems which now seem to be finally resolved. An edition is being prepared, and the texts will soon be put at everyone's disposal. Meanwhile, increasingly detailed descriptions of the contents, also covering some linguistic aspects, and partial editions have appeared.<sup>68</sup>



Fig. 2: Manuscript of the *Aksumite Collection*, foll. 17v–18r, after restoration (foll. 16v–17r according to a preliminarily reconstructed numbering, cf. Bausi 2011c, 30–33). *Traditio apostolica*, 3:3–4; 7; 8:1–8; 13; 11; 10:1–3. Picture by Ethio-SPaRe project.

In its present form, the manuscript (witnessing to what I have called the *Aksumite Collection*) contains thirty-six Ethiopic texts of various length (some are very short), including writings of the Church fathers (patristic literature), liturgical texts (rituals and prayers for church service), canonical texts (ecclesiastic rules and conciliar canons), and one historical text. Although different in content, it much resembles the so-called *Sinodos*, a very influential collection of normative and liturgical texts translated from Arabic in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, still in use and much revered in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tawāḥedo Church. But whereas the bulk of the Ethiopic canonical and liturgical texts known at present, the *Sinodos* included, was believed to derive, through a complicated and patchy sequence of translations, from medieval and late Arabic textual recensions (made since the 14<sup>th</sup> century), with only occasional earlier texts surviving (*i.e.* some liturgical texts

<sup>68</sup> Cf. all details in Bausi 2006b; 2006c; 2009b; 2011c; 2012; 2013.



appear to be archaic and Greek-based, although they are mixed with the Arabic-based later ones), the new manuscript clearly reaches back to the oldest known layer of the early Christian (not only the Ethiopian) canon law and liturgy. Beside remarkable linguistic elements, the manuscript provides for the first time evidence that the development of a textual tradition may be traced in non-Biblical Ethiopic texts to such a degree of detail.

It is difficult to imagine that the *Aksumite Collection* is an isolated case and it is reasonable to assume that the number of the preserved Aksumite texts is relatively low thanks to a process of replacement, in which the old translations from the Greek (marked by linguistic and cultural peculiarities) were supplanted by new translations from the Arabic. We cannot, however, establish whether the revision of the texts was accompanied by parallel and consistent updating of codicological features, or whether the older models kept exerting their influence.<sup>69</sup>

Some other characteristics of the manuscript are also worth mentioning. This is probably the oldest non-Biblical Ethiopic manuscript known so far. It shares some palaeographic and linguistic features with the other older Ethiopic manuscripts (including the two Four Gospels manuscripts from 'Abbā Garimā).<sup>70</sup> As to the content of the *Aksumite Collection*, I will mention two texts.

The first is a new Ethiopic version of the so-called *Traditio apostolica*, 'Apostolic tradition', definitely the most important Christian canonico-liturgical text, once attributed to Hippolytus of Rome. Its Greek original being lost, it has survived only in a number of versions in Latin, Coptic, Arabic and Ethiopic, and in rearrangements in Greek, Syriac, Arabic, of which the most archaic and faithful is a Latin version preserved in the *scriptio inferior* in the palimpsest manuscript

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<sup>69</sup> In this context, the case of the *Maṣḥafa tēfut*, a manuscript consisting of the Octateuch, Four Gospels and *Sinodos*, dating from the 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> centuries, that was accurately reproduced (directly from the original model or from an intermediary copy) by order of King Iyāsu I (1682–1706) is remarkable: cf. Bausi 2008, 539.

<sup>70</sup> Certain striking and so far never observed morphological affinities with verbal patterns of Tigrinya, the language at present spoken in the highlands of Tegray and Eritrea, spoil the monolithic structure of classical Ethiopic, where, except for a few examples in the causative prefix and pronoun morphology of epigraphic texts, no morphological variations had never been recorded before. One could make a number of observations on the linguistic and palaeographic aspects of this new document, and elsewhere I have already dealt with some philological and linguistic peculiarities. A partial list of the latter includes non-application of the laryngeal rules, phonetic change from *diyā-* to *zeyā-*, *ē*-ending (fifth order) forms in isolated prepositions and plural relative pronoun, peculiar pattern of imperfect of the passive *t*-stem (*ye-t-qattal*, instead of *ye-t-qattal*), *a*-prefix (first order) in causative-of-the-reflexive *ast*-stem (*yāsta-*, instead of *yāsta-*), cf. Bausi 2005a. Among a number of other linguistic features I can mention for example frequency of the nominative gerundive (as in Tigrinya) as opposed to accusative gerundive (as in Ethiopic and Amharic).

Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, Codex LV (53). But the Ethiopic text of the *Traditio apostolica* as previously known to us from other sources, is quite different from the text in the *Aksumite Collection*, the latter being clearly a new *independent* witness to the archetype. Although the two Ethiopic versions share few common passages and are thus in a complex relationship, numerous correspondences with the Latin testify to the new text's belonging to the oldest recoverable textual phase of the *Traditio apostolica* and, at the same time, point to conjunctive errors (or innovations) of all the other witnesses. Moreover, as a large portion of the Latin text is lost, the new Ethiopic version represents a great step forward in our knowledge of the archetype of the *Traditio apostolica*; a problem that has challenged philologists for more than a century since Edmund Hauler's publication of the Latin text in 1900.<sup>71</sup>

The second text is even more important. Probably prefixed to the collection as an introduction, it contains a *History of the Alexandrian Episcopate*, mutilated in some parts.<sup>72</sup> The text is exceptional from two points of view: first, it is the first Ethiopic text of intentionally historical character dating from Aksumite period (with the exception of the epigraphical texts written by the initiative of the Aksumite kings); second, the historical fragments may be identified as belonging to a lost Greek *History of the Alexandrian Episcopate* (not to be confused with the later Copto-Arabic *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*), whose existence scholars from Tito Orlandi onward have traced in later texts, the most important of which are the Latin excerpts in Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, Codex LX (58). The new Ethiopic manuscript provides by far the most important evidence for the reconstruction of the original text, of which, for long passages it is the unique witness.<sup>73</sup> The anonymous author of this *History* had access to materials drawn from the Alexandrian archives and some documents from the archive have been incorporated into the narrative. The narrative starts with the founding of the Alexandrian episcopal seat by Saint Mark and the early bishops, continuing with the events under the episcopate of Peter and his immediate successors down to the outbreak of the so-called "Melitian schism" and the story of Arius the priest.

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71 Cf. Bradshaw / Johnson / Phillips 2002; Bausi 2009b; 2010d; 2011c.

72 The bishop of Alexandria was also head of the Egyptian Church from the 4<sup>th</sup> century onward.

73 At present, a critical edition, translation, and codicological and historical commentary both of the Ethiopic and Latin versions is underway, by myself for the Ethiopic text and by Alberto Camplani for the Latin witnesses; cf. also the papers by Alberto Camplani, "Methodological Considerations on the Sources about the Patriarchate of Alexandria in Late Antiquity", and Alessandro Bausi, "New Ethiopic Documents for the History of Christian Egypt", jointly presented at the "Ninth International Congress of Coptic Studies", Cairo, Coptic Patriarchate, September 14–20, 2008, now printed, Bausi / Camplani 2013. Cf. also Camplani 2003, 38–39; 2004, 154–162; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009.

The details it provides, including lists of bishops and their respective dioceses recorded for the episcopates of Maximus (264–282), Theonas (282–300) and Peter (300–311), provide unparalleled and hitherto unknown documentation for the history of early Christian institutions in Egypt. Furthermore, quotations from this *History* which survived in a few later Ethiopic texts are marked as passages from the *Synodicon of the Law*. This is probably the name under which the collection had been known until the 15<sup>th</sup> century in the Ethiopian literary tradition.

The existence of these and other ancient Latin versions of texts parallel to ancient Ethiopic versions in the manuscripts of the Biblioteca Capitolare of Verona is noteworthy: it seems that archaic and outdated texts have in this case been preserved in “peripheral” areas of the Christian world.

The manuscript confirms the pre-eminence of religious, literary and cultural relationships between Egypt and Aksumite Ethiopia, and definitely proves the existence in an early period of translated canonical and liturgical texts. The language of the newly discovered texts is mainly a word for word rendering of the Greek original; it is also a valuable source for Aksumite Ethiopic. Remarkable features pointing to dialectal (probably Tigrinya) peculiarities may be due to the copyists or redactors – less likely to the translator(s) – and deserve careful scholarly scrutiny. Some parts of the collection were reused and included in later Ethiopic works which were being translated anew from Arabic, such as the *Sinodos*. The complex and unexpected “philological” processes attested in the *Aksumite Collection* textual tradition call for new methods of analysing and interpreting the Ethiopian literary tradition. The new evidence also strongly reasserts that neither the study of the Christian Orient nor that of Antiquity and Late Antiquity (Eastern and Western) is possible without taking into consideration the contribution of the Ethiopic sources.

## List of sigla and abbreviations

EMML = Collegeville, Minnesota, Ethiopian manuscripts microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, St John’s Abbey and University.

EAe = Siegbert Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, I: A–C; II: D–Ha; III: He–N; (ed. in cooperation with Alessandro Bausi) IV: O–X, Alessandro Bausi (ed. in cooperation with Siegbert Uhlig) V: Y–Z. *Supplementa Addenda and Corrigenda Maps Index*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014.

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Florian Sobieroj

# Arabic Manuscripts on the Periphery: Northwest Africa, Yemen and China

In the initial part of this paper I will introduce some basic general concepts related to Arabic manuscript culture in general, such as material aspects of manuscript production (writing supports, book bindings, etc.) and textual characteristics of the manuscripts (means of orientation, colophons, para- and micro-texts, etc.). I will then concentrate on some features which may be considered specific to Arabic manuscripts produced on the western, southern and eastern peripheries of the Islamic culture zone, i.e. in the Maghrib, Yemen and China. As the field of Sino-Arabic codicology is one of the least known, in this paper I have devoted more space to Arabic manuscripts in China than to the other two peripheral regions. The paper aims at drawing attention to the existence of a large spectrum of codicological types which developed on the margins of the Islamic world, in some cases under the influence of a host culture.

## 1 Arabic manuscript culture

The term 'Arabic manuscript culture' refers to manuscripts written in the Arabic language in Arabic script. This culture should be distinguished from those, mostly showing Islamic influence, which use a (modified) version of the Arabic script, for other languages. These include (to mention only a few examples) Persian or Turkish, or the Chinese *xiaoer jing*.

Geographically, the culture of Arabic manuscripts extends from the Maghrib at the Western periphery of *Dār al-islām* (the Islamic world, which here coincides, generally speaking, with the Arab world), to the borders of Iran and beyond, also including those non-Arab countries which were subject to the influence of Islam, and which have used Arabic as a sacred language.

Chronologically, the beginnings of Arabic manuscript culture predate the advent of Islam. Pieces of northern Arabic writing were inscribed on stone, bones, wood, and other relatively long-lasting materials long before the Hijra, the flight of the Prophet Muḥammad from Mecca to Medina. After periods of time in which papyrus and parchment were in use as the main writing supports, from the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century paper became the preferred surface for manuscript writing. Arabic manuscript culture gradually declined with the introduction of printing technology, which, as far as Egypt is concerned, is connected with the

expedition to the Nile valley launched by Napoleon at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. But even after the import of this technological revolution, manuscripts continued to be produced in the Arab countries well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even on the basis of printed text editions.

The great number of extant manuscripts shows that Arabic cultures made extensive use of writing as a medium for transmitting texts. However, the scribes did not trust this medium blindly. In order to overcome the textual corruption inescapable in the process of copying, they relied on oral transmission and checked the manuscripts according to dictation by an authorized teacher. Three peculiar features strike a modern reader of Arabic or Islamic manuscripts: 1) a tendency to provide certification of transmission of the text through chains of authorized transmitters (*isnād*) and hearing certificates; 2) elaborate commentaries written between the lines and in the margins; and 3) the presence of significant variation in the transmitted texts.

## 1.1 Writing supports

The writing surfaces employed in the Arab world for manufacturing manuscripts were papyrus, parchment and paper.

### 1.1.1 Papyrus

The earliest material used in the Arab world as a writing support was papyrus. The word ‘papyrus’ denotes a reed plant which grows in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Sicily, and Syria, and also the writing material made from it. In Arabic it is designated by words such as *qirṭās*, *waraq al-qaṣab* or *waraq al-bardi*. Papyrus was used for various purposes such as letters, books, contracts, and tax registers. It was used until the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century when competition from paper became overwhelming. Papyrus manufacture died out by the 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century and only scattered remnants of manuscripts written on papyrus in Arabic script have survived. Although the papyrus roll, manufactured from glued sheets of papyrus, was used in the first centuries of the *hijra*, the codex became the dominant form for book-texts from the beginning of the Islamic era. Some manuscripts were also produced in the form of rotuli, i.e. rolls, where the text runs parallel to the axis (i.e. perpendicular to the length of the roll). As papyrus could be washed and reused, palimpsests have survived. Papyrus was also turned into cartonnage (hard cardboard made of

scraps of papyrus combined with gesso) for boards used in manuscript bindings (cf. Déroche 2000, 35–36).<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1.2 Parchment

Since parchment's raw material is of animal origin, unlike papyrus, it could be produced anywhere. The technology of parchment making was relatively simple. The Arabic terms for parchment are *raqq*, *riqq*, and *jild*. Parchment is defined as skin of an animal prepared for writing, with preparation implying a process of unhairing, tanning and drying. Most commonly, sheepskins were used, and less often those of other animals such as goat, calf, donkey or gazelle. Parchment has flesh and hair sides, the former generally being whiter and softer than the latter. Manuscripts copied on parchment are almost exclusively codices as both surfaces, recto and verso, were equally available to the scribe. Although parchment was the preferred medium in manuscript production prior to the triumph of paper, only few specimens of non-fragmentary parchment codices have survived from the Islamic world. When paper became widely available, parchment was still used in the central lands of the Islamic world from the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, and in the Muslim West manuscript copyists used it alongside paper until the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century and even later. Like papyrus, parchment was reused (and called *ṭirs*) as the material was durable and the traces of an earlier use could be removed by scraping and washing (cf. Déroche 2000, 49).<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1.3 Paper

The Arabic words for 'paper' are *qirṭās* or *waraq*; and the Persian term *kāghadh* is found in Arabic as *kāghid* or *kāghad*. The latter, a Soghdian loan word, is reminiscent of the fact that the Soghdians, an Iranian ethnic group, propagated paper-making techniques through their contacts with Chinese Central Asia.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the expansion of Islam brought the Arab conquerors into contact with the Chinese civilization of the Middle Kingdom. The repercussions of the military encounter between the Abbasids under their general Ziyād b. Ṣāliḥ and the Chinese during the battle at the river Talas in 751 in modern Kyrgyzstan<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For papyrus cf. Gacek 2009, 193–194.

<sup>2</sup> For parchment cf. Gacek 2009, 195–196.

<sup>3</sup> For the historical context of the battle, seen from a Chinese perspective, see *Baike quanshu* 2007, 71.

were far-reaching. The capture of Chinese papermakers caused scribes in the Islamic world to gradually adopt paper for manuscript production. Paper mills were set up in Samarqand by Chinese craftsmen. The introduction of paper to Baghdad followed soon, with Egypt turning to paper by the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century (paper mills are attested in Fustat). Papers were classified by the names of cities where mills were set up: Baghdādī, Samarqandī, etc.

Great care was given to the preparation and outward appearance of paper used for manuscripts. It was supposed to be translucent and capable of receiving writing without soaking up the ink: hence it was scrupulously smoothed. Paper may be divided into materials with or without water-marks. Starting from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, European paper became watermarked when a novel technique of sewing an emblem onto the wire screen was developed in Italy in 1264. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of manuscripts in the Arab lands, including Turkey and the Maghrib, were copied on imported watermarked paper (Pedersen 1984, 60–67).<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2 Bookbinding

Early Qur’anic codex manuscripts are believed to have been held together by two wooden boards. From this binding a bookcover in the form of a leather wrapper developed. It is possible however, that both types of binding coexisted (Gacek 2009, 25). The sheets became united with the wooden boards by means of a spine. The loose spine divided by raised transverse bands used in Europe was not employed (Pedersen 1984, 104).

In the early period of Islamic bookbinding, the wooden boards were covered with leather. Subsequently, they were replaced by pasteboard made by pasting together sheets of paper. The customary binding was not merely a piece of leather carrying the spine and both sides. The leather on the back cover of the book extends over the side to form a flap and is folded inward under the front page of the volume where it rests. The flap, which serves to protect the book, by virtue of its flexibility easily tears off and in many manuscript codices it is actually missing.

In earlier manuscript codices, the surface of the leather is ruled with lines that form a large rectangle which fills the inner part of the board and is surrounded by one or more borders. Within these, often divided into smaller rectangles, there may be geometric patterns of lines and dots. The leather is brown in various shades, but may partly be gilded or coloured. The pattern embellishing

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<sup>4</sup> On paper see also Gacek 2009, 186–193.



it is produced by blind tooling which is done with a wheel and small individual stamps.

In the late Timurid period (around 1500), a pattern emerges in which the bookcover is dominated by a central medallion which may be almond-shaped. The medallion is usually covered with tendrils and arabesques. It may also be an oval formed around a circle or be completely circular (Pedersen 1984, 106). During the Mongol period (the early 16<sup>th</sup> century), in decorating the surface of the boards single stamps were supplemented by the introduction of metal stamping plates. Ornamentation came to assume Persian designs. A new element introduced into book binding at that time was lacquered binding, a Chinese technique transplanted to Persia (Pedersen 1984, 110).<sup>5</sup>

### 1.3 Tables of contents and other means of orientation

The Arabic manuscript tradition developed certain devices that aim to help a reader to orient himself within the text(s). These first of all include tables of contents and chapter headings.

#### 1.3.1 Tables of contents

Tables of contents (Arabic *fahras*, *fihris*, *fihris*) may be found in Arabic manuscripts in various places: on the flyleaves or, very seldom, on the inside of the front cover of the binding or at the end of the text. If written in these places, the contents are more likely to have been entered by the user than the copyist. The contents may also be prefaced to the text – in this case by the scribe – on pages immediately preceding its beginning. Finally, a list of chapters, i.e. *kitābs* and *bābs*, may also be integrated in the body of the text following the *basmalah* (*bi'sm Allāh* 'in the name of God'), *ḥamdalah* (praise of God) and *taṣliya* (eulogy of the Prophet) which are the conventional formulae that any Islamic text ideally starts with. In this case, the table of contents stems from the author.<sup>6</sup> The preface, whether it includes the tables of contents or not, is introduced by the formula

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<sup>5</sup> On bookbinding see Gacek 2009, 22–33.

<sup>6</sup> An example for a manuscript in which the table of the contents is embedded in the preface (fol. 4r-v) is the undated codex BSB Cod. arab. 1551 (Qāḍī 'yāḍ ḍ, K. *al-Shifā'*). Unless specified otherwise, the Arabic manuscripts referred to in this paper are owned by the *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München* and carry the call number BSB Cod. arab. x. (the abbreviation BSB is henceforth omitted).

*ammā ba'd* 'and then', and may also mention the author's name, the title of the text, and the reason which led the author to compose it (*sabab al-ta'lif* 'the reason of composition'). All these Arabic expressions may be highlighted by the use of red colour. The rubrics attract the reader's attention and help identify the author and the title of his text. The title and sometimes the author's name may, alternatively or additionally, be written in a head-piece (*'unwān*), drawn above the *basmalah* at the very opening of the manuscript.

The contents may be condensed on a single folio-page but may also extend over a number of pages. Often, the chapter headings are inscribed in rectangular panels which may be arranged in two or more columns. Usually, the titles of *kitāb*'s ('books') and *bāb*'s ('chapters') given in the table of contents include reference numbers which relate to the folio numbers or to the volume's pagination, the latter likely to originate not from the scribe but from the hand of a user. In some cases, the contents prove to be very important, as they may provide bibliographical data not found in the text or texts referred to: e.g. variant titles.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.3.2 Chapter headings

In Arabic manuscripts, chapter headings which mark the beginning of a *bāb* (literally: 'gate', i.e. chapter) are very common. These headings, particularly in texts on Islamic law (*fiqh*), may also be entitled *kitāb* 'book' (e.g. *kitāb al-ṭahāra* 'book of ritual purity' which regularly constitutes the first chapter in the legal tracts of the schools of Sunni Islamic law.) The *kitāb*'s or *bāb*'s may again be subdivided into passages (Arabic *faṣl*), and a passage may be broken up in turn into units that carry headings, or are introduced by expressions such as *qism* (part), *naw'* (type), *mabḥath* (subject of discussion), etc.

In carefully executed manuscripts the headings may not only be found within the text but may also be written on the margins. The margins themselves can also be filled with commentaries, corrections and collation notes, as well as with signs denoting text divisions.<sup>8</sup> If the headings are written with red ink within the text, they are usually also highlighted analogously in the margins.

<sup>7</sup> The beginning of the extraordinarily rich composite (multi-text) manuscript Cod. arab. 1135 which contains more than 40 texts in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, includes tables of contents which not only mention alternative titles but also those not reflected in the texts at all.

<sup>8</sup> Signs denoting the divisions of a text into which it is sectioned by length of the text irrespective of its chapter/verse division, i.e. in halves (*niṣf*), quarters (*rub'*) or thirtieth (*juz'*) parts, are found in Qur'an manuscripts (and prints).

## 1.4 Colophons

Ideally, the Arabic text in the manuscript ends with the copyist's colophon, which is immediately recognizable by virtue of its shape (usually triangular). The colophon includes words of the scribe usually written in a few lines of decreasing length or – less frequently – in a few lines of equal length (e.g. Cod. arab. 1635) which follow the *explicit* of the author's text. Since it also serves a decorative purpose, the colophon may be written in red ink (e.g. Cod. arab. 1626, a Shī'ī manuscript), or its lines may be marked with red dots placed between the semantic (or prosodic) units. The latter is most common when the colophon – in continuation of the end lines of the author's text – is written in rhymed prose.

As a rule, the colophon includes the copyist's name, the date of completion of the copy and sometimes the name of the place where the copying was done. The interface between the author's text and the scribe's copy may be introduced by words such as *tamma naskhuhū* or *faragha min naskhihi* 'he has completed his copy' or *qāla kātibuhū* 'he who copied this said', whilst the name of the scribe is often preceded by the formula '*alā yad* '[written] by the hand of (so-and-so)'.

Occasionally, the scribe also gives some details concerning the manuscript from which he made his copy<sup>9</sup> and its relationship to the author's autograph.<sup>10</sup> In the interface between *explicit* and colophon, or in the context of a description of the relationship between the scribe's exemplar and the author's copy, the copyist may mention the author's name and title of the work copied. Such information is of particular value in the case of a manuscript which is incomplete at the beginning where we would usually find these bibliographical details.

More often however, the scribe gives some information about the process of his own work. He may mention that he copied the manuscript for his own purposes (*li-nafsihī*) and accordingly designate himself as its owner (Cod. arab. 1643), or he may say that he stood in the service of someone who employed him to produce the copy.<sup>11</sup> The scribe may not only mention a date to indicate when he

<sup>9</sup> In Cod. arab. 1483, a manuscript dated 1301/1884 and containing 259 leaves, the scribe mentions that the author needed 5 ½ months until he completed his work.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., in the Maghribī manuscript Cod. arab. 1641, the scribe mentions that he copied the text from a manuscript which had been copied from the autograph. The colophon of Cod. arab. 1375, produced in 1636, includes the claim that the manuscript was copied directly from the autograph of the author, al-Baqarī (d. 1699).

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Cod. arab. 1612, dated 1581; Cod. arab. 1606, produced in Qārṣ by a scribe in the service of a scholar from Van in Anatolia, dated 1751.

completed the work of copying but may also state when he began it, thus allowing us to work out the duration of the time he spent on the project.<sup>12</sup>

The colophon often includes prayers in which God is asked to grant forgiveness to the scribe, his parents and grandparents (Cod. arab. 1635, see Fig. 1) as well as to all Muslims, male and female, living and dead (Cod. arab. 1642, 1650). Often, prayers are also extended to Muḥammad, the Prophet, his family and companions (Cod. arab. 1635) in which context the scribe may express his need of the Prophet's intercession as protection against hellfire (Cod. arab. 1680). It is not uncommon that the colophon carries over to a stanza of poetic verses, copied by the scribe and sometimes maybe even composed by him.<sup>13</sup> In these, constituting the most common theme, the reader's forbearance is solicited as regards any mistakes he may detect while studying the scribe's copy (e.g. Cod. arab. 1652). The

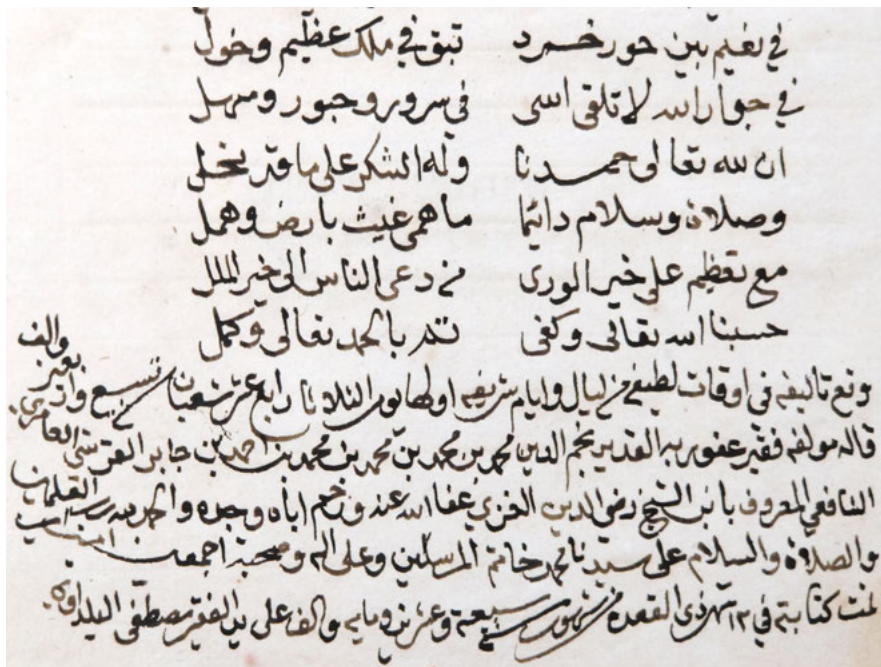


Fig. 1: The colophon often includes prayers in which God is asked to grant forgiveness to the scribe, his parents and grandparents. München, BSB Cod. arab. 1635.

<sup>12</sup> The colophon of Cod. arab. 1642, dated 1130/1717 and containing 163 leaves (cf. Sobieroj 2010, no. 308), betrays that the copyist spent three years until completing his work.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Weisweiler 1935, 101–120; also Schubert / Würsch 2001, 574–576.

latter verses form part of a standard repertoire which shows an astonishingly wide variety of motifs.

Giving the time at which the copy was completed, the scribe may mention the full date including week-day, day of the month, name of the month as well as the year after the Prophet's hijra, or he may restrict himself to mentioning the year only. Sometimes the year is given without thousand or even without hundreds, shortened to three or two digits (the century has to be added by the informed reader), e.g. 195 = [1]195 (Cod. arab. 1124 [Sobieroj 2007, no. 67]), 81 = [10]81 (Cod. arab. 1135 [op. cit., no. 78], fol. 69v), 82 = [10]82 (Cod. arab. 1135, fol. 120v).<sup>14</sup> To avoid any ambiguities which can easily arise due to the nature of Arabic script (especially when words are written without diacritical points) the scribe may mention the year of copying both in words and in numbers (e.g. Cod. arab. 1648). The name indicating the place where the copy was completed may be restricted to a town or village, or the scribe may specify that he executed the copying in a particular mosque (Cod. arab. 1642), teaching institution (*madrassa*) or Sufi convent (Cod. arab. 1612), etc.

Finally, the colophon may also include notes by the scribe on the collation procedure to which he subjected his copy. In the manuscript dated 1235/1820, Cod. arab. 1690, the text of a commentary on the famous *Ḥizb al-Nawawī* is followed by critical remarks of the scribe, Ismā'īl b. Ḥājj Sulaymān al-Divrighi al-Dimashqī, who complains about the difficulties he encountered in the collation of his copy due to philological incompetence<sup>15</sup> he attributed to the scribe of his exemplar.<sup>16</sup>

## 2 Maghribī, Yemenī and Arabic manuscripts of Chinese provenance

Arabic manuscripts were also produced in the marginal areas of the Islamic world and, as far as the Chinese case is concerned, in a precarious interaction with the host culture. These peripheral manifestations of Arabic manuscript culture cannot be treated exhaustively here. The Maghribī, Yemenī and Chinese Arabic manuscript cultures are only adduced as examples. Other marginal and often marginalized manifestations, like those found for example in East Africa, are of equal importance.

<sup>14</sup> Shortened dates of this kind are more commonly found in owners' marks rather than in colophons, e.g. [1]255, [12]69 (Cod. arab. 1820), [1]191 (Cod. arab. 1811).

<sup>15</sup> *Lam yutqin al-kitāba bal bālāgha fī taḥrīfihā* ('not only did he not master writing but he even went to extremes in distorting it', fol. 40v).

<sup>16</sup> For colophons cf. Gacek 2009, 71–76.

## 2.1 Maghribī manuscripts

Manuscripts produced in the Muslim West, comprising North Africa and the part of the Iberian Peninsula which had come under the rule of Islam, show a number of peculiarities. Kairouan and Cordoba assumed a central role in the beginnings of Arabic manuscript culture in the Muslim West, the earliest extant Maghribī manuscripts being dated second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century (Déroche 2004, 68).

### 2.1.1 Material aspects of the Maghribī manuscript books

The specific characteristics of Maghribī manuscript books may first be seen in the composition of the codex. The gatherings or quires (Arabic: *kurrāsa*) brought together to form the book in the Middle East typically consist of 10 sheets (*quinion*). In the Maghrib, on the other hand, greater diversity prevails. Quires of 8, 10 or even 12 sheets were used by the artisans. Often, however, a quire of 6 sheets (*ternion*) is found in the region, representing a formula which had enjoyed the favour of the Jewish scribes in Spain (Déroche 2004, 77). This opens a question which influences had exerted themselves upon peripheral Arabic manuscript culture in the Maghrib.

Another specific trait of Maghribī manuscripts is continued use of parchment long after it had been replaced by paper in the eastern part of the Muslim world (Déroche 2004, 77). Even though paper production was well known in 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup>-century Ifriqiyya (modern Tunisia) and paper was already widely used as the writing support, in the Muslim West unlike the East Qur'an manuscripts continued to be copied on parchment until the 9<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century.

### 2.1.2 Maghribī type of the Arabic script

The Maghribī type of Arabic script which prevailed in books and documents of the West for ten centuries appears to the eye to be more angular than the eastern Naskhī styles. Its angularity may be explained by its derivation from a Kūfī script, as some scholars have maintained.<sup>17</sup>

One of the most salient features of the Maghribī type of script is the pointing of letters *fā'* and *qāf*, which differs from that of the eastern scripts. The consonantal letter *fā'* has a dot below, while the letter *qāf* has a dot above. Some further

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<sup>17</sup> Octave Houdas, *Essai sur l'écriture maghrébine* (1886); quoted in Déroche 2004, 75.

peculiarities of the Maghribī scripts may be summed up as follows: The letters *ṣād* and *ḍād* are usually conspicuously elongated and discernibly big. The *Nūn* at the end of the word is often written half open, and likewise appears rather large. The letter *dāl*, which sometimes resembles *kāf*, can be easily confused when written in round shape with the letter *rāʾ* or final *yāʾ*. The descender of the letter *lām* in final position is written as a rounded semi-circle. The medial *sīn* is also conspicuous, with its ascender written with a high initial stroke. Quite common in the Maghribī type is the *hamza* (the sign representing a glottal stop) which in order to render *madda* (a sign above the *alif* used to represent the *hamza* + *alif* sequence, e.g. in words like *ākhiran* ‘finally’) is prefaced as a separate letter to initial *alif* (e.g. Cod. arab. 1641). Some of these graphic peculiarities are ancient and may be traced back to the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> and even 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> centuries. Déroche 2004, 80f. mentions as example letter *ṭāʾ/ẓāʾ* with its oblique upstroke or final *alif* which extends below the base-line.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.1.3 Colours and devices for structuring text

Another important characteristic of the Maghribī manuscripts is the generous use of coloured inks which strikes the eye as soon as the codex is opened. The gamut of colours used was far wider than in the East. Here red, blue and yellow alternate with black (Déroche 2004, 78). The main text is usually written with a brownish black ink; but (analogously with the eastern Arabic manuscripts) if the base or source text is supposed to be commented on in the body of the manuscript, this base text is highlighted in red (e.g. Cod. arab. 1689).

Red ink is also employed for the verse markers: the “drops” (or dots) which structure the rhymed prose of the introduction, e.g. in Cod. arab. 1689, a manuscript of recent production.<sup>19</sup> Red is used in this manuscript for chapter headings (e.g. a heading carrying the title *tatimma* ‘continuation’) and to indicate literary sources quoted by the author (e.g. *wa-qāl al-Suyūṭī*, ‘Al-Suyuti said’). Quite inconsistently, greenish yellow was used to introduce the same quotation only a few pages later, where red continues to be used for headings and to indicate literary sources. On the whole, however, red predominates over yellow or any other colour.

<sup>18</sup> For a meticulous analysis of the forms found in Maghribī writing cf. Boogert 1989, 30–43; also Gacek 2009, 147–149.

<sup>19</sup> The manuscript contains a commentary by a Sudanese author (13<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> c.) on a versification of a work by al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) on Shāfiʿī legal philosophy.



In the undated Maghribi manuscript Cod. arab. 2635/9, (Fig. 2) the text is structured by the use of highlighted words and single letters which are written disproportionately large in red or bold black.



Fig. 2: The text in this undated Maghribi manuscript is structured by the use of emphasized words and single letters which are written disproportionately large. München, BSB Cod. arab. 2635/9.

The loose leaves of this rather unpretentious manuscript are densely filled with 25 lines per page<sup>20</sup> and contain a copy of a text entitled *al-Naṣīḥa al-kāfiya li-man khaṣṣahu llāhu bil-‘āfiya* ('Sufficient counsel for one who has been favoured by God with intactness'), on the subject of mystical instruction by the well-known Moroccan Sufi author of Shādhili affiliation, Aḥmad al-Zarrūq al-Fāsi (d. 899/1493). In some places in this manuscript, black and red intermingle in a single expression, with a red line drawn above the black letters of a word. Consistently highlighted

<sup>20</sup> By contrast to the layout of manuscripts of the eastern Arab countries which, as a rule, are written in an uneven number of lines per page, Maghribi manuscripts are often written in lines of even numbers (e.g. BSB Cod. arab. 1689, 1698, 2635/3: 22 lines; 2679: 16 lines, 2634/11: 18 lines).

are the expressions *wa-qāl* (he said), *na'am* (yes), *wa-minhā* ('to this [subject] belongs'), written alternately in red and black, or a single letter *waw* whose head is picked out in black. The tapered line of final *mīm* in the word *na'am* ('yes') has been drawn deep down into the sublinear area. Apart from these emphases, there are no other apparent devices for structuring the text in this manuscript, such as blank spaces or indentations. But a number of words are highlighted, again quite inconsistently, by overlining in a different ink, to indicate the beginning of a new semantic unit (fol. 10v) or to mark individual expressions in an enumeration of terms (fol. 6r).

In Maghribī manuscripts, at the beginning of a text (fol. 1v, i.e. at the place where in the eastern Arabic manuscripts an 'unwān, or the title of the work may be found) headings written in very large letters may be inscribed which are made up of the basmala and a eulogy of the Prophet, followed often by a motto, e.g., in Cod. arab. 1698, "its beginning is blessed and its ending fortunate" (*mubārak al-ibtida' maymūn al-intihā'*); see Fig. 3.



Fig. 3: The beginning of the text is made up of the *basmala* and a eulogy of the Prophet, followed by a motto written in very large letters: *mubārak al-ibtida' maymūn al-intihā'* ("its beginning is blessed and its ending fortunate"). München, BSB Cod. arab. 1698.

### 2.1.4 Further fate of the Maghribī type of script

After flourishing for nearly 10 centuries, the Maghribī script is now confined to decoration on title pages. And yet it may be added, slightly modifying Déroche's assessment, that still in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts continued to be written in the Maghribī style.<sup>21</sup> According to Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406; quoted in Déroche, 2004, 90–91), Maghribī scripts had already started to decline with the demise of the Almohad dynasty in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Models imported from the Eastern Mediterranean littoral became increasingly appreciated and imitated. They were taken up by copyists, illuminators and binders from the Maghrib; and Ottoman prototypes came to replace local ones (op. cit. 95). However, the Maghribī script survived in sub-Saharan Africa, where it became known under the name of Sūdānī, an off-shoot which possibly came from Tunisia/Qayrawān.<sup>22</sup>

## 2.2 Yemenī manuscripts

In a group of about 150 manuscripts of the south Arabian origin<sup>23</sup> acquired by the Austrian (originally Bohemian) Jewish traveller-scholar Eduard Glaser (d. 1908) and sold in 1902 to the then Royal Library in Munich ("Königliche Hof- und Staatsbibliothek zu München"), a number of characteristic features may be determined as follows:

The majority of the books treat issues of law according to the school of the Zaydiyya, a moderate Shī'ī sect almost exclusively rooted in the Yemen, while legal tracts belonging to the *madhhab*'s of Sunnī Islam, on the other hand, are very few. Texts on poetry and dogma may also be found in relatively high numbers in this group of manuscripts whereas the natural sciences are clearly underrepresented. Owners' marks entered in the manuscripts<sup>24</sup> show that quite a number of codices formerly belonged to the members of the families of the ruling Zaydī Imams.

<sup>21</sup> E.g. Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek, Ms. orient. A 807i (dated 1358/1939), Ms. orient. A 1856a (1329/1911); BSB Cod. arab. 1702/1, containing a text by the celebrated Sufi Aḥmad al-'Alawī (d. 1934).

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Cod. arab. 1110 = Sobieroj 2007, no. 53; on Sūdānī script see also Gacek 2009, 257–258.

<sup>23</sup> This group of manuscripts has been described in detail by the present author in Sobieroj 2007 (cf. also the introduction to the catalogue, pp. XXI–XXXIX).

<sup>24</sup> E.g. Cod. arab. 1193, 1209, 1306.

The layout of the legal texts tends to be rather austere and only exceptionally is the beginning of a manuscript of this group decorated with an ornamental head-piece (*'unwān*), the like of which, in Ottoman manuscripts, is often found drawn above the *incipit* of the text. Instead, the Zaydī manuscript text is often preceded by a vignette (fol. 1r or 2r) in which the full title of the work and the author's name, accompanied by numerous honorific appellations, are inscribed.

The examined manuscripts tend to be somewhat inconsistent as to the number of lines on each page (e.g. Cod. arab. 1199, 1214). Also the format of the text frame appears to be rather flexible (e.g. Cod. arab. 1199, 1214) and catch-words in the inner corner at the bottom of the verso-pages are often missing (e.g. Cod. arab. 1191). Many manuscripts lack folio numbers which, however, may be replaced by a numbering of quires (e.g. Cod. arab. 1190, 1191). In some cases, the number of the quire is spelled out in words, written in red, and accompanied by a number placed above (e.g. Cod. arab. 1228). In a book on pharmacology (Cod. arab. 1242, 1244), instead of folio or quire numbers written in the upper corner of the recto pages, the initial letters of the discussed medicine have been entered.

In the manuscripts on Zaydī law the outline (*rasm*) of the Arabic main text is often only sparsely provided with diacritical dots. However, the defective pointing here may be contrasted with the commentaries on the Qur'an<sup>25</sup> or in collections of poetry and *diwan*'s (Cod. arab. 1230, 1235, 1237) which are not only provided with full pointing but they may also be partly or fully vocalized. However, coloured marking of headings and selected expressions tend to be carefully executed throughout the juridical texts. Alternatively, a thicker *qalam* (reed pen) may have been used for highlighting these expressions in black, which are often traced additionally by a red line (Fig. 4).<sup>26</sup>

The colophons which conclude the manuscripts of this group often contain very detailed information about the production of the text and the copy, and in some instances fill almost a full page (e.g. Cod. arab. 1295). It is not rare that an expression like *la'allahū* ('perhaps', Cod. arab. 1310) or *aẓunnuhū* ('I think', Cod. arab. 1295) may be found written in the colophon, which indicates that the scribe harbours doubts concerning the accuracy of a chronological date he mentions.

<sup>25</sup> E.g. Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr* (Cod. arab. 1206) or that of Baihaqī (Cod. arab. 1209).

<sup>26</sup> Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Glas. 25: beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> *juz'* (fol. 8v-9r) of the law-book entitled *al-Baḥr al-Zakḥkhār* by Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. al-Murtaḍā (d. 840/1437, Brockelmann 1937–49, 2,238–240).





**Fig. 4:** A thicker *qalam* (reed pen) is used for highlighting headings and selected expressions in black. Beginning of the second *juz'* of the law-book entitled *al-Baḥr al-Zakḥkhār* by Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. al-Murtaḍā (d. 840/1437). Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Glas. 25, fol. 8v-9r.

The technical expression *qaṣṣāsa* ('narration') is not commonly found in the colophons of Ottoman manuscripts or in codices produced in the central Arab lands. This term refers to collation by means of recitation. In the Yemeni manuscript Cod. arab. 1284 the term *qaṣṣāsa* refers to a teaching session, and it is stated there that the scribe read out and corrected the copy he had made only five days before in the presence of his teacher.<sup>27</sup>

Some of the Yemeni manuscripts include *ijāza*'s, i.e. highly individualized certificates authorizing the recipient to teach or "transmit" (*riwāya*) a specific text. The oldest *ijāza* in this group (which however lacks the term itself) is found in a manuscript copy (Cod. arab. 1183) of a legal tract entitled *Kitāb al-aḥkām* composed by the founder of the Zaydi Imamate al-Hādī ilā l-ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn

<sup>27</sup> Another Yemeni manuscript containing a *qaṣṣāsa* note is Cod. arab. 1324 dated 899/1493. According to the colophon the text was revised by the scribe on the basis of the *muswadda* (the author's draft) about half a century after the completion of the copy.

(d. 298/910). This rudimentary *ijāza* note is integrated into the beginning of the law-book and contains the request of a student addressed to his teacher, namely a son of the author, to authorize him to teach the text which he had previously studied under him. A much more developed *ijāza* found in another manuscript (Cod. arab. 1306) of the group acquired by Eduard Glaser had been issued by the Zaydī scholar al-Qāḍī Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā, for the Zaydī Imam, i.e. the ruler, al-Hādī ilā l-ḥaqq ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Ḥasan (d. 1494–5). The certificate was entered into the manuscript book one year after the completion of the copy of the text (889/1485) to which it is related. The *ijāza* is written without diacritical dots overall in a rather careless manner which remarkably contrasts with the elegant hand of the rhymed prose of the composition. The Qāḍī praises the Imam in the *ijāza* through which he authorizes the Imam to transmit the work on Zaydī law. He apologizes to the Imam for issuing the certificate to someone whose knowledge, he says, far exceeds his own. However, tradition sanctions the practice that the author dispenses authorization to his students.

The title page of the Yemenī manuscripts quite often carries a magical formula believed to act as a protective device against the book worm (*al-sūs*) whose activity could result in the destruction of the book-binding and paper, and consequently, in a loss of legibility. A typical formula, which starts with the invocation *yā kabikaj* ‘Oh, kabikaj!’ (to a toxic plant thus called) is found in Cod. arab. 1196, 1199, 1307. Less often copied in Yemenī manuscripts are charms which were expected to prevent theft. A formula entitled ‘*azīmat al-sāriq* ‘spell against the thief’ is written on the title page of the dated manuscript Cod. arab. 1261 which was produced in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Whilst these or similar apotropaic formulae can also be found in manuscripts which originated in other parts of the Arab world, another micro-text seems to be more unique to the Yemenī book-making tradition. On one of the first or last leaves of the manuscript, or on the inside cover of the binding, the Islamic formula of the profession of God’s unity is found, often accompanied by supplications that explain the purpose of these inscriptions. God and his angels are asked to safeguard this confession as a treasure that He can implant in (the heart of) the scribe on the Day of Judgment. A copyist of a Zaydī legal text informs the reader, in the margins of fol. 266r of Cod. arab. 1323, that he came across a prayer of the Yemenī author al-Hādawī al-Wazīr (d. 914/1508) in which he asked God that he may make the composition of this work a treasure (*dhakhīra*) credited to its author on the Last Day. Poems praising the text or its author are another type of micro-text often found in the beginning pages of Yemenī manuscripts. On the title page of BSB Cod. arab. 1321, eight Kāmil verses are inscribed which praise the commentary of al-Saḥūlī al-Ṣan‘ānī (d. 1060/1650) on the celebrated Zaydī legal work entitled *al-Azhār fī fiqh al-a’imma al-aṭḥār* (Fig. 5). The *Hidāyat al-afkār* of the aforementioned al-Hādawī is extolled in Cod.

arab. 1313. Both the beginning and final leaves of these three manuscripts are filled with verses lauding the Qur'an commentary *al-Kashshāf* of the congenial Mu'tazilī author Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144; no. 144, 146, 418 = Cod. arab. 1202, 1204, 1206).



**Fig. 5:** The celebrated Zaydī legal work *al-Azhār fī fiqh al-a'imma al-aṭhār* by Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. al-Murtaḍā. The colophon is explicit and dated (Rajab 956/July-August 1549). Collation notes and explanatory glosses are in the margins, the latter also between the lines. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. or. Quart. 110, fol. 113v-14r.

## 2.3 Arabic manuscripts in China

Although large areas of China, in the western and north-western provinces in particular, on the whole still identify with the Islamic heritage of their ancestors, there is little reliable information about the location of Arabic and other Islamic manuscripts in that country. An important contribution to the filling of this lacuna is the chapter by Mozafar Bakhtyar in Geoffrey Roper's *World Survey*



of *Islamic Manuscripts*, which lists a number of Islamic manuscript collections seen by the Iranian scholar during a visit to China in or shortly before 1993.<sup>28</sup>

### 2.3.1 Main categories of manuscripts

The manuscripts existing in China may be divided, following a classification of Bakhtyar, into four main categories:

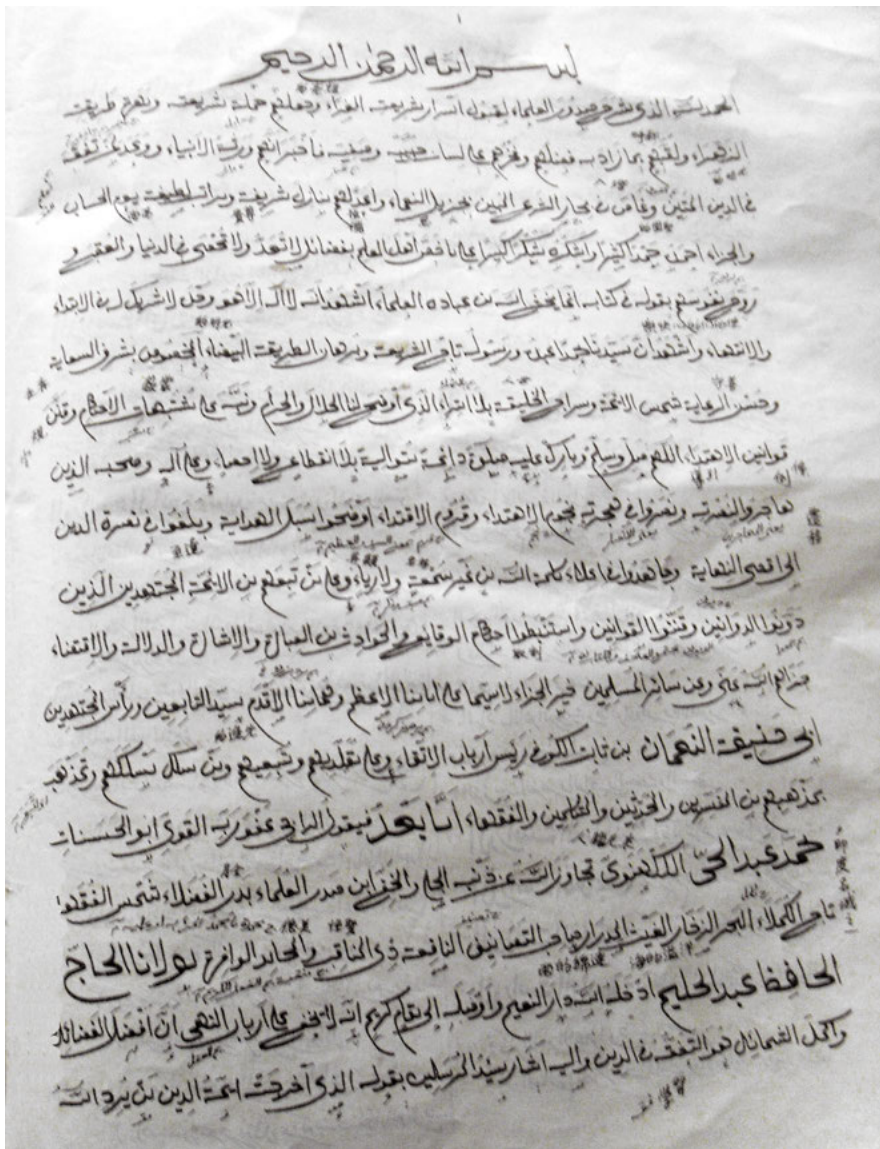
#### 1. Manuscripts on Qur'an commentary (*tafsīr*), Islamic law, dogma, and prayer.

As far as *tafsīr* works are concerned, the commentaries of al-Bayḍāwī (d. 716/1316; Brockelmann 1937–49, 1,530–4), the *Tafsīr Jalālayn* of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥalli (d. 864/1459; Brockelmann 1937–49, 2,138) and his student Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505, Brockelmann 1937–49, 2,180–204) as well as of al-Ṣāwī<sup>29</sup> are widely read by Chinese Muslims in the Northwest. The Persian *Tafsīr-i Ḥusaynī*, i.e. the *Tafsīr-i mawāhib* by Ḥusayn b. 'Alī al-Wā'iz-i Kāshifī (d. 910/1505; *Türk Diyanet* 1988ff., 19,16–18), is highly popular, particularly in Sufi circles. As most Muslims in the Chinese Northwest follow the *Ḥanafī madhhab* (school of law), the manuals of this school are studied, and in particular the “*Wiqāya*” (*Wiqāyat al-riwāya fī masā'il al-Hidāya*), with its commentaries by al-Maḥbūbī (d. 680/1281; Brockelmann 1937–49, 1,468–69); see Fig. 6. Ma Tong, who is the author of a number of authoritative works on Sufism in Xibei, mentions *Shelaiha weigaye* 舍来哈 伟嘎也 (= *Sharḥ-i Wiqāya*) by Maihamude (Maḥmūd (?))<sup>30</sup> as a commentary which forms part of the curriculum in Chinese Madrasa education (cf. Ma Tong 1985, 29, no. 6). As to dogma, the creeds of Najm al-Dīn 'Umar b. M. al-Māturidī al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142; Brockelmann 1937–49, 1,548–550), *al-'Aqā'id al-Nasafiyya* (*Agayilin Yisilan* 阿嘎依林 伊斯兰; cf. Ma Tong 1985, 29, no. 5) are still studied to this day.

<sup>28</sup> Bakhtyar 1994, 63–116. Besides using Bakhtyar as source for this section of my paper, I will also draw on my own data from two trips through northwest (*Xibei*) China undertaken in 2008 and 2009, as well as pieces of information disclosed to me by some Chinese scholars based in Lanzhou, Yinchuan and Shanghai, and by some Sufis as well as other Muslims to whom I have spoken in various places in Xibei.

<sup>29</sup> Probably identical with Aḥmad b. M. al-Ṣāwī al-Miṣrī al-Shādhilī al-Khalwatī (d. 1241/1825; Brockelmann 1937–49, 2,465 S 2,743), author of a commentary (*Ḥāshiya*) on the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (cf. Kaḥḥāla 1957–61, 2,111–112).

<sup>30</sup> Brockelmann does not mention in his *Geschichte* any “Maḥmūd” as author of a commentary. The death date 1346, mentioned by Ma Tong, however, is the year in which the author's grandson and commentator, 'Ubaydallāh b. Mas'ūd, died (Brockelmann 1937–49, 1,468,1a).



**Fig. 6:** A manuscript of the *‘Umdat al-ri’āya* by al-Lakhnawī. The beginning of the text with *basmala*, *ḥamdala* and author’s name. Fully pointed *khaṭṭ ṣinī* by a trained hand, with some vocalizations. The expression *ammā ba’d* and personal names are highlighted in bold script. Interlinear and marginal glosses are in Chinese characters (e.g., the author’s name is explained as related to an “Indian town”). Sanying, Ningxia, private collection.

## 2. Classical works on Arabic and Persian grammar.

Ma Tong (1985) 29, no. 3 mentions a work authored by Nūr al-Dīn Jāmī (d. 898/1492; Brockelmann 1937–49, 2,266–267) entitled *Shelaha Kafeiye* 舍拉哈咖费叶 (= *Sharḥ Kāfiya*) among the Madrasa teaching manuals (to be identified with Jāmī's commentary on Arabic grammar entitled *al-Fawā'id al-ḍiyyā'iyya* on *al-Muqaddima al-kāfiya*; Brockelmann 1937–49, 2,267,11).

## 3. Texts of the followers of the mystical orders of the Naqshbandiyya-Jahriyya,<sup>31</sup> Qādiriyya<sup>32</sup> and Kubrawiyya.<sup>33</sup>

The Jahriyya is a sect which grew out of the Naqshbandiyya order in China in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and has its strongholds in Ningxia province, in the loop of the Yellow River. Their sacred verse texts are called *Mukhammas*, and are based on the *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* of the Egyptian mystical poet Sharaf al-Dīn al-Būṣīrī (d. 694/1296; Brockelmann 1937–49, 1,308–14)<sup>34</sup> as well as a second Arabic text in praise of Muḥammad called *Madā'ih*.<sup>35</sup> As for the Qādiriyya order, the *Sirr al-asrār* of the order's founder, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (d. 561/1167; Brockelmann 1937–49, 1,436), is studied by the *murīds* of the Guo gongbei 国共北 in Linxia 临夏, formerly called Hezhou 河州 or "Little Mecca".<sup>36</sup> The Qādirī Sufis likewise meditate on a famous collection of mystical letters, the *Maktūbāt-i rabbānī*<sup>37</sup> by Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034 / 1624; *Türk Diyanet* 1988ff., 22,194–199 [art. "İmām-i rabbānī"]), the great Indian Sufi master of the Naqshbandiyya. The most important text studied within the Kubrawiyya order is the celebrated *Mirṣād al-'ibād* of Najm al-Dīn Rāzī Dāya

31 Rendered in Chinese as Zheherenye 哲赫忍耶 or 哲赫林耶.

32 The Gadelinye 嘎德林业 order has its centre in the area of Linxia in southern Gansu province. The town is graced by three Qādirī convents, situated next to each other, called *Da gongbei*, *Taizi Gongbei* and *Guo gongbei*. The latter was built in the second decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century around the tomb of a saint remembered as Chen Yiming 陈一名 Muḥyi al-Dīn M. Ḥusayn (d. 1718; cf. *Linxia Guo gongbei* 1997, 1, 14), allegedly a Prophet's descendant in the 29<sup>th</sup> generation. For the Qādiriyya in northwest China see Ma Tong 2000; idem 1980, 228–270; for the *Da Gongbei* Ma Tong 1980, 230–244.

33 Rendered in Chinese as Kuburenye 库不忍耶; cf. Ma Tong 1980, 80, 333; Algar 1982, introd.

34 On this work, entitled in Chinese *Gaisuide buerde* 盖绥德 布尔德, see Ma Tong 1985, 32, no. 2.

35 Cf. Ma Tong 1985, 34, no. 4. Facsimile reproductions of Ṣīnī-style manuscripts of both prophetic works are sold, for example, in the bookshop adjacent to the Great mosque (*Nanguan Qingzhensi*) of Yinchuan. Whereas the rear of a long book-shelf was partly dominated (Sept. 2009) by books on Chinese Sufism and traditional Tafsīr works, in the front, books were displayed bearing a distinctly Wahhābī imprint.

36 For Linxia see the Chinese Islamic encyclopaedia entitled *Zhongguo yisilan baike quanshu* = *Baike quanshu* (2007), 215f.

37 The epistles are also being read, in an Arabic version (*ta'rib*) printed in Mecca, by the students of the Jahriyya convent called Honglefu gongbei 鸿乐府拱北 near Wuzhong in Ningxia province.

(d. 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century; *Türk Diyanet* 1988ff., 32,496–497 [art. “Necmeddîn-i Dâye”])<sup>38</sup> which also was one of the main literary sources of the illustrious Sufi author Liu Zhi 刘智, a Hui scholar of Nanjing (d. 1158/1745; *Baike quanshu* 2007, 321–322).<sup>39</sup>

4. Some well-known texts of Persian literature,<sup>40</sup> extant in many copies in China.

### 2.3.2 Manuscript losses

The majority of Islamic manuscript collections in China are privately owned. Most manuscripts are not kept in state libraries or museums but rather in the villages, private homes, mosques or Sufi convents. In reaction to their historical experience, owners are secretive about the number of their manuscripts. Even nowadays Muslims hide their books fearing the government may learn of their existence and seize them.<sup>41</sup> As the manuscripts continue to be moved from one place to another it is difficult to judge as to the reliability of numbers given for any collections said to exist at a particular place.<sup>42</sup>

It is still not known as to what extent Arabic and other Islamic manuscripts have been destroyed or removed from China. However, three main factors<sup>43</sup> which had a disastrous effect with regard to this loss of cultural heritage may be determined:

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**38** A manuscript, enriched with Chinese glosses, of this systematization of Sufism has been brought from Xibei to France by Henri d'Ollone (d. 1945) during the famous expedition he undertook in 1906–1909 (cf. Algar 1982, 20). The text of the *Mirṣād* has been translated from Persian into English by Hamid Algar (1982); for the *Mirṣād* see also Ma Tong 1985, 30, no. 11, p. 33, no. 3.

**39** The *Mirṣād*, translated into Chinese already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Leslie 1982, 89, no. 7), is mentioned in the bibliographical lists of Arabic and Persian titles prefaced by Liu Zhi to two of his writings.

**40** Bakhtyar mentions manuscripts he saw of Sa'dī's *Gulistān* (Ma Tong 1985, 30, no. 9) and *Būstān*, of the *Diwān* of Ḥāfiẓ, of Rūmī's *Mathnawī* and some works by Jāmi. Ma Tong 1985, 28–31, lists 13 Arabic and Persian titles still studied in the Madrasas by the *Hailifan* 海里凡 (= *khalīfas*=students).

**41** An Ahong of a Jahriyya convent reported to me that in order to save a prayer book from the Red guards he kept hiding the manuscript by taking it back and forth between the *gongbei* and his home.

**42** Bakhtyar 1994, 106 mentions a collection of Islamic manuscripts located in Shanghai Municipal Library which, when he wrote, was preparing to move from Nanjing Road to a new site on Huaihai Rd. However, during my visit to the gigantic modern library in 2009 I was told by various employees that no Islamic manuscripts whatsoever are or were kept in the library. I was referred to the affiliated *Bibliotheca Major of Zi-ka-wei* (徐家匯 Xujiahui) established in 1874 by Jesuit missionaries where again Islamic manuscripts were said to be non-existent.

**43** Cf. Bakhtyar 1994, 68–69.

1. In the era of colonialism, European orientalists and archaeologists were eager to collect Islamic manuscripts (Bakhtyar 1994, 69). Rarely however were manuscripts, seized unlawfully, returned to the country of their origin (which may have saved them from destruction during the revolution).<sup>44</sup>
2. Internal wars between local governors as well as sectarian disputes. There also needs to be added, for the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) as well as the Civil War between the Communists and the Guomindang of Chiang Kai-Shek (1946–1949).<sup>45</sup>
3. The “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” between 1966 and 1976 during which thousands of Arabic and other Islamic manuscripts were destroyed. Buildings of the Muslim communities were demolished as the people were made to believe by the communist propaganda that their traditional culture embodied reactionary attitudes.<sup>46</sup> Eyewitnesses report that book burnings took place regularly at that time.<sup>47</sup> Historical inscriptions in mosques and in temples<sup>48</sup> were smashed and calligraphic carvings obliterated. That at least a catalogue of the destroyed books survived seems to have been the exception rather than the rule.<sup>49</sup> It may be added that the destruction of Islamic libraries was already anticipated by the “Religious Reform Movement” in 1958 (Dillon 1999, 164).

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<sup>44</sup> It may be mentioned that the governor-general of Turkestan, Konstantin P. von Kaufmann, between the years 1868–76 procured for the Russian Czar 300 manuscripts written in the Arabic script which he then passed on to the Imperial Public Library of St. Petersburg. In 1962 all the manuscripts are said to have been returned to Uzbekistan (cf. Zaitsev & Datsiuk 2005, 13).

<sup>45</sup> Oral information obtained from Prof. Wang Jianping.

<sup>46</sup> The Chinese text on a stone plate attached to the Yinhe mosque of the Gedimu 格迪目 (*qadīm*) sect (on the Gedimu “orthodoxy” see Dillon 1999, 95f.; Ma Tong 1980, 88) in Guyuan, southern Ningxia, erected in 1874, recalls that the site was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and thereafter rebuilt. An example of a Sufi convent demolished during *wenhua geming* is the Honglefu gongbei. The convent, erected in 1778, is said by its inhabitants to have been wholly destroyed during the “years of turmoil” and turned into farmland whilst their books were annihilated. However, nowadays Islamic life is flourishing again in the rebuilt convent and traditional education has been revived.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Dillon 1999, 164. The Ahong of Sanying mosque situated on the trunk road between Yinchuan and Guyuan showed me in 2009 his Arabic books among which there were a few *guji* 古籍, Arabic manuscripts on grammar and Tafsīr. Some of the books showed traces of burning, and the cleric indicated that they had been salvaged from the fires during the violent campaigns.

<sup>48</sup> One Lama of the Gelugpa monastery of Labrang in Xiahe 下河 county, southern Gansu, confided to me in 2009 that the majority of their library-books were destroyed during the revolution.

<sup>49</sup> The titles of 90 Arabic and Persian manuscripts of Yongshou mosque Sanlihe 三里河 of Beijing survived in a handlist compiled by Bouvat (1908). Both the mosque library and the 500 year-old building were destroyed (Bakhtyar 1994, 68).

### 2.3.3 Some characteristics of Sino-Arabic manuscripts

#### 2.3.3.1 Bindings and paper

Very many manuscripts in China are in poor condition, due to the extreme climate (Bakhtyar 1994, 75) and as a result of the above mentioned historical upheavals. Often the leaves are kept in a loose-leaf binding, and as a result they have come into disorder. The end-pages are often missing. The bindings of Arabic and other Islamic manuscripts made in China tend to be primitive, mostly lacking the flap and any kind of ornamentation. The binding made of sheep's leather covering a manuscript of sewn quires seen in Honglefu convent seems to be rather exceptional.

Many Islamic manuscripts in China were written on folded paper. Traditional Chinese paper employed for manuscript copying was extremely thin. Therefore, the ink penetrated the paper affecting the back side. As a result the verso page could not be used for writing. To solve this problem folded paper (folded only once) was used for copying texts.<sup>50</sup>

#### 2.3.3.2 The Language of Chinese Muslims

Owing to the fact that Islam was spread from central Asia into northwest China mainly through Persian-speaking missionaries, the Persian element is strongly present in Chinese Arabic literacy. Persian became the dominant language of the region conquered by the Mongols, and it remained in use well into the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) which followed the Yuan era (1260–1368). Textual explanations and interpretations were often written in Persian, and many manuscripts are finished with the Persian formula *tamām shud*. The language of the Muslims in China has sometimes been called *Huihui hua* 回回话, the term used by some writers for both Arabic and Persian (Dillon 1999, 156). Arabic as the language of the Qur'an, irrespective of the relative dominance of Persian, has of course been preserved by Chinese Muslims and numerous heads of community, *Yimamu* 伊玛目, especially those who belong to the growing number of Chinese Muslims who are fortunate to have performed the pilgrimage to Mecca and can boast mastery of Arabic.

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Bakhtyar 1994, 72. Another example is the al-Ḥarīrī manuscript of the Famen menhuan (see below).



### 2.3.3.3 Use of the *xiaoer jing* script

Some Islamic manuscripts have been written in the *xiaoer jing* 小儿经 (or *xiao jing* 小经 ‘small classic’ or *xiaoer jin* 小儿锦 ‘little brocade’) script. The term designates a system of transliteration of Chinese into Arabic script enriched by some letters borrowed from the Persian alphabet. The script was derived from primary level text-books in which this method was used as a way of introducing children (*xiaoer* ‘children’) to the Arabic script prior to the study of the Arabic language itself (cf. Dillon 1999, 155). Many Chinese Muslims preferred transliterating Chinese into the Arabic script to writing characters, as they felt that learning *hanzi* ‘(Chinese) characters’ was incompatible with their religion. The oldest evidence of *xiaoer jing* is mentioned by Bakhtyar (1994, 77) who saw a sample copied in 713/1313 found in the *Ṭibb-i ahl-i Khitā* of Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh Hamadānī (fl. 14<sup>th</sup> century, Brockelmann 1937–49, 2,256), the wazīr of the Mongol emperor Öljaytu. It includes a transliterated passage from a versified Chinese medicinal text.<sup>51</sup>

## 2.3.4 Sino-Arabic script

### 2.3.4.1 Two manuscripts of the Jahriyya<sup>52</sup> order in praise of Muḥammad

Another distinctive style of the Arabic script used in the majority of Islamic manuscripts of Chinese origin is generally called *Ṣinī*, and seems strongly influenced by various types of Persian script. It resembles the cursive Thuluth popular in Persia and Central Asia during the Mongol Ilkhan period. The *Ṣinī* style of Arabic script shows the influence of Chinese characters, its letters being “rounded and flowing [...] with slender anklets and fat feet”.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Cf. the illustration in Bakhtyar 1994, 77; the second and third lines are Chinese, the words written beneath the line are Persian translations. For *xiaoer jing*, also called *Pinyin wenzi* 拼音文字, see a comprehensive article in the internet encyclopaedia *Wikipedia*.

<sup>52</sup> The Jahriyya, also called the “Chanting Aloud Sect” (*gaosongpai* 高诵派) – with regard to the remembrance of God, is a division, founded by Ma Mingxin, of the Naqshbandiyya Sufi order and may be counted as the largest of the Islamic menhuan in China (cf. Dillon 1999, 121–125).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. China Heritage 2006. Bakhtyar 1994, 72f., however, relates the script to *Nasta’liq-i Turkistānī*, a style used in “Chinese Turkistan”. Sheila S. Blair mentions some characteristics of a Chinese script which she considers to be a variant of Muḥaqqaq (Blair 2006, 373–374). She includes an illustration from a thirty-volume Qur’an manuscript dated Muḥarram 804/October 1401, Khanbaliq (= modern Beijing), figure 9.3 (Blair 2006, 374).



A facsimile reproduction<sup>54</sup> of a manuscript copy of the Arabic text in praise of God and his Prophet, entitled *Madā'ih* (Maidayihā 迈达伊哈) may serve as a first example of the Sino-Arabic script (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7: A facsimile reproduction of a manuscript copy of the Arabic text in praise of God and his Prophet, entitled *Madā'ih*.

The script is compressed, fully vocalized and equipped with diacritical dots. The letters *rā'*, *waw* and *nūn* in the final position are written with long tapered ends.

The manuscript was copied according to the Chinese preface by Li Fa-en 李发恩, Imam of Milexian 弥勒县 in Yunnan province<sup>55</sup> and concludes with the Persian formula *tamām shud*.

The text, with incipit *al-ḥamdu lillāhi lladhī sharrafa l-anāma bi-ṣāḥibi l-maqāmi l-a'lā wa-kammala s-su'ūda bi-akrami maulūd* ("praise be to God who has honoured mankind through the lord of the highest station, i.e. Muḥammad, and perfected the blest through the most noble of those [ever] born"), composed in rhymed prose is followed by a prayer, written by the same hand, in which the name of "Sidi Bahā' al-Dīn an-Naqshbandiyya" is mentioned. Therefore, the Sufi

<sup>54</sup> The facsimile was published in the Chongde 崇德 mosque of Kunming in Ramadan 2009.

<sup>55</sup> Personal communication with a student of the Honglefu convent.

order for whose students the text was printed (as stated in the preface) should be identified as Jahriyya. The members are obliged to recite the *Madā'ih* as part of their daily spiritual practice.

The *murīds* of the Jahriyya believe that the order's founder Ma Mingxin, who carries the honorific name (*zunhao* 尊号) Wiqāyatallāh, al-Shahīd (d. 1781; *Baike quanshu* 2007, 345), brought the *Madā'ih* to China on his return from Yemen.<sup>56</sup> He had received *ijāza* from a Yemenī shaykh called Muḥammad b. Zayn (? *Zaini* 载尼) as well as the behest to spread the teachings of the Naqshbandiyya in the Middle Kingdom (Ma Tong 1985, 86). Wiqāyatallāh ended his life being executed in Lanzhou by the Qing government. In the wake of Ma's execution his followers called themselves *shuhedayi* 束赫达伊 (Arabic: *shuhadā'*, 'martyrs') and continued to nurture in themselves the spirit of martyrdom (Ma Tong 1985, 85) which, in the first place, was directed against the oppressive rule of the Manchu Qing dynasty.

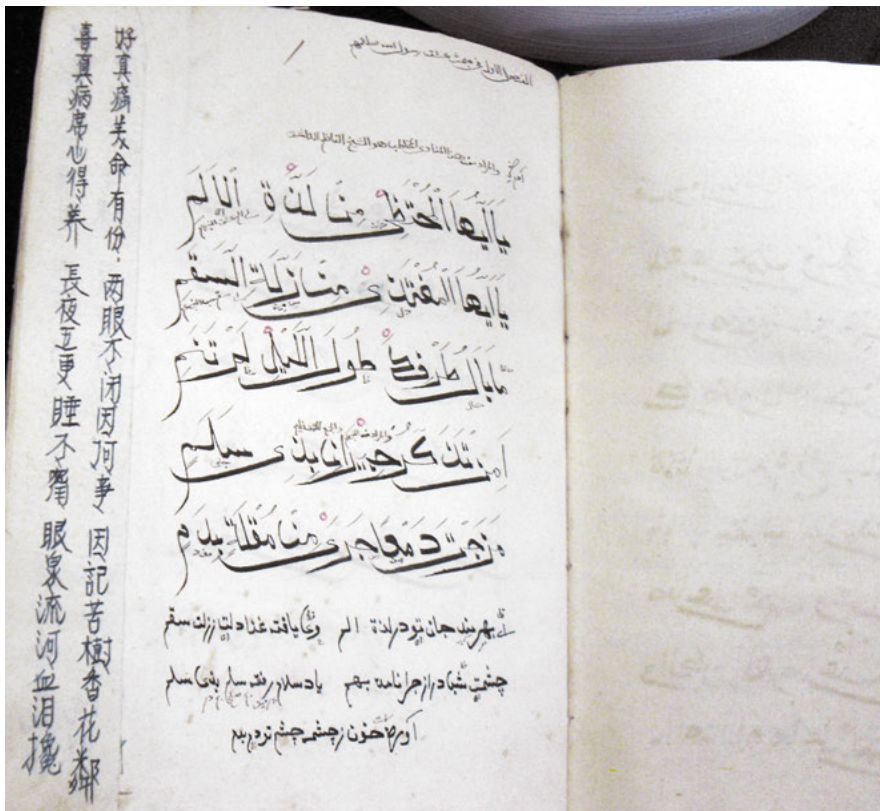
The *Mukhammas* (Muhanmaisi 穆罕麦斯) on the *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* of al-Būṣīrī is a second text in praise of Muḥammad held in the highest esteem among the Sufis of the Jahriyya order.<sup>57</sup> As is the case with the previous poem, the *Mukhammas* is also recited as part of their daily *wazīfa* (cf. the Chinese postscript of the facsimile, Ma Liesun 1992, 166).

Still in the 1960s, manuscript copies of the *Mukhammas* were made by the Jahri-Sufis of Ningxia. A copy of the text, extant in the Honglefu Gongbei (Fig. 8), has been executed by the head of the convent, an elderly Shaykh called Yan(?) Liangbi 闫良璧, Muḥammad Ishāq, who originated from Xiji 西吉 in southern Ningxia. He is said to have studied the art of Arabic calligraphy in the province and completed, in 1969, the manuscript which I was shown in September 2009. The copy includes a colophon with the name of the scribe (*bizhe* 笔者), in both Chinese and Arabic.<sup>58</sup>

56 Ma Tong 1985, 34 describes a text entitled *Madā'ih* (Mandanyeh 满但夜赫), probably identical with the above, authored by one Xiehe Aihamode Yiben Guximu 谢赫 艾哈默德 伊本 贾希姆 (Shaykh Aḥmad b. Qāsim?), which Ma Mingxin had been taught, in the Yemen, by his Sufi master Ibn Zayn, i.e. 'Abd al-Khāliq Zayn al-Mizjāji al-Zabīdī (*Baike quanshu* 2007, 345, 739) (d. 1181/1767; Sobieroj 2010, no. 215; Kaḥḥāla 1957–61, 5,110).

57 A manuscript copy of the text was published as facsimile by Ma Liesun (1992) 马列孙.

58 Upon my request, the Shaykh also entered the year of copying, viz. 1969, into the manuscript.



**Fig. 8:** A copy of the *Mukhammas* written by Shaykh Yan(?) Liangbi 闫良璧, Muḥammad Ishāq, the head of the Jahriyya convent Honglefu Gongbei. Wuzhong, Ningxia, the Honglefu Gongbei library.

The poetic text in Arabic is written in a distinctively Chinese style, i.e. *khatt šīnī*, with full diacritical dots and vocalizations. The script is compressed and only the upstrokes of a few letters like *alif* and *lām* stand out. The ends of final *nūn*, *mīm* and *yā'*, as well as of *rā'* and *zay* are tapered, letter *waw* is written disproportionately large. Some letters such as *ḍād*, *nūn* or *yā'*, in their final form, are stretched out to the extent that the subsequent words are embraced from below. On the whole, the script of the Honglefu manuscript is more angular than that of the facsimile copy as is shown in the curvatures of a number of letters in the final position.

On each folio or page of the manuscript of Būṣīrī's poem (incipit: *Yā ayyuhā l-muḥtaẓī min ladhdhati l-alamī / yā ayyuhā l-muḥtadhī min zallati l-saqamī*, "o

*thou who art imparted the bliss of pain / o thou who nourishest thyself from the slip of sickness*”) two half verses of the original poem are preceded by three Arabic verses of amplification, thus making a stanza of five lines per page. The composer of the *Takhmis* is a poet called Muḥammad Mawlawī Tabadikani 台拔迪喀尼 Ṭūsī (cf. facs. 168) or – more correctly – Beyādgānī al-Ṭūsī. A parallel manuscript, Manchester no. 472, has the author’s name as M. b. M. b. M. al-Batātakānī. Mingana, the cataloguer of the Arabic manuscripts in the John Rylands library, refers to Ḥājji Khalifa 1964, 4,527 for the Persian name and death date which is estimated by the Turkish bibliographer as ca. 900/1494.

The Ṣīnī-Arabic text is followed, at the bottom of each page, by three lines of a Persian translation written with a thinner *qalam*.<sup>59</sup> On the left margin of the recto page of the Honglefu manuscript a Chinese translation has been added written in two columns. The language seems less refined than that of the facsimile which is given on facing pages and written horizontally from left to right in five lines. Also, by contrast to the facsimile, the modern manuscript has interlinear explanatory notes in Arabic as well as a heading in the upper margin, viz. *al-faṣl al-awwal fī mabḥaṭh ‘ishq rasūl Allāh* “the first passage concerning the love of God’s messenger”.

#### 2.3.4.2 A small Islamic manuscript collection: the library of the Famen

##### menhuan 阊门门宦

To complete this section, I will briefly touch upon one small collection of Arabic and Persian manuscripts owned by a Sufi convent in Gansu province and not mentioned in Bakhtyar 1994. It may serve to underpin the impression that Islamic manuscript collections in the northwest are rather found in the villages than in the large cities.

I saw the collection in August 2009 in a village called Shitouwa 石头洼, at a short distance from Linxia. Twenty to thirty manuscripts forming part of a library of about a hundred books, are located in the home, a stately mansion with a large walled courtyard surrounded by agricultural fields, of the present *Shaihai* 筛海 of the Famen sub-sect of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya, Muḥammad b. Shu‘ayb, Fa (= Chinese family name) Yuanzhong.

Some of the manuscripts are in bad condition: the paper is especially damaged in the books that were buried in the ground for protection against the

<sup>59</sup> The scribe of both the Arabic and the Persian text, published by Ma Liesun, according to Ma Tong (1985, 33), is called Ma Yuanzhang 马元章. The Manchester manuscript, written in an Indian Ta’liq has also both Arabic text and (rhymed) Persian translation.

Red Guards. Apparently this strategy proved successful and only a very small number of the Famen books were lost in the “years of turmoil”.

The collection includes Arabic works such as the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥariri (d. 516/1122; Brockelmann 1937–49, 1,325–29) written on traditional Chinese folded paper, as well as Persian texts which outnumber those in Arabic. There is a manuscript of Rūmī’s *Mathnawī*<sup>60</sup> and one containing a glossary of the *Tafsīr al-Ḥusaynī*. Some of the manuscripts were copied in the countries of the central Islamic zone, from where they were brought to China, but a number of codices originated in the work of Chinese Ahongs. These are represented not only as copyists but also as compilers and authors.<sup>61</sup>

The collection is said to have been bequeathed from one shaykh to his successor from among the members of the Fa family. The owners’ stamps dated 1326/1908 found in some of the manuscripts (e.g. in the abovementioned glossary) show that the books had already belonged to al-Ḥājj Saʿīd b. Ibrāhīm al-Khajwī (sic!, i.e. of Hezhou) who transplanted this branch of the Naqshbandiyya from Mecca to northwest China.

This transmission of Sufism is attested in two certificates of transmission (*ijāza*) which may be considered as forming the most valuable part of the collection. A Chinese translation of the two manuscripts has been published on pp. 15–19 of a booklet written by Ḥājj Muḥammad Shuʿayb b. al-Shaykh Shams al-Dīn al-Khajwī, Fa Yuanzhong.<sup>62</sup>

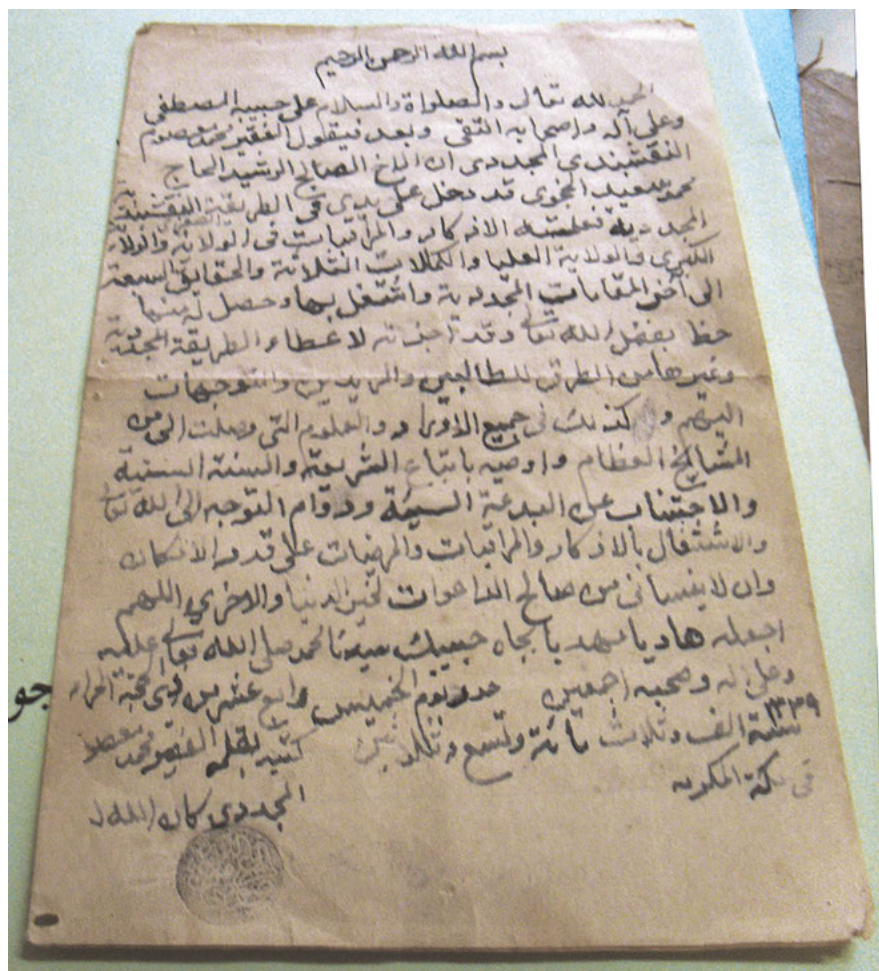
The first *ijāza* (Fig. 9) (= Chinese translation 15–16), written in a neat Naskhi hand with full diacritical dots, 18 lines to the page, was issued by a native Indian Sufi of Delhi, called Muḥammad Maʿṣūm al-Naqshbandī al-Mujaddidī al-Madani, in Mecca, Thursday, 14th Dhū al-Ḥijja 1339/1920–1921, for al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Khajwī. The *ijāza* specifies that M. Saʿīd entered the Naqshbandiyya order “at the hands” of M. Maʿṣūm who had taught him the *adhkār*, various *murāqabāt*, the “three words” (*al-kalimāt al-thalātha*) and the “seven realities” (*al-ḥaqāʾiq al-thalātha*), i.e. various spiritual practices and prayers. The shaykh grants him permission to initiate into the Mujaddidiyya and other (!)

<sup>60</sup> According to the colophon the manuscript was copied in Dhū l-Ḥijja 1134/September 1722 by a scribe who called himself Baghdādī. The town referred to probably is not to be identified with Baghdād in Mesopotamia but rather with Persian-speaking Baghdādak in Khwārazm (for this place see Algar 1982, introd. 9).

<sup>61</sup> The manuscripts include Persian tracts on Sufism, mostly of the Naqshbandiyya; various Arabic prayer books, partly with Arabic and partly with Persian glosses; an Arabic text entitled *al-Kifāya fī l-Hidāya*, on philosophy [by al-Ṣābūnī (?), d. 580/1184; cf. Brockelmann 1937–49, S 1, 643,20,1]; a Persian commentary on Prophetic traditions, divided in 16 sections (*faṣl*).

<sup>62</sup> The booklet is entitled *Famen menhuan daotong puxi* 阉门宦道通谱系 [Arabic title: *al-Silsila al-ʿaliyya al-Naqshbandiyya al-Mujaddidiyya*] and was published in Linxia, 2009.





**Fig. 9:** A certificate of transmission (*ijāza*) issued by a native Indian Sufi of Delhi, called Muḥammad Ma'šūm al-Naqshbandī al-Mujaddidī al-Madanī, in Mecca, Thursday, 14th Dhū al-Ḥijja. 1339/1920–21, for al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Khajwī. Shitouwa, Gansu, The Famen menhuan collection.

orders (*wa-qad ajaztuhū li-i'ṭā' al-tarīqa al-Muj. wa-ghayrihā min al-ṭuruq lil-ṭālibin wal-murīdīn wal-mutawajjihāt ilayhim*) whosoever he wishes, and also to initiate them into all the litanies and gnosés (*fī jamī' al-awrād wal-'ulūm*) which he himself had received from his masters. He continues with the commandment (*wa-ūshīhi*) to his disciple that he should follow the *sharī'a* and Muḥammad's *sunna* and eschew innovations; to turn to God (*tawajjuh*) permanently and pre-

occupy himself with the litanies (*adhkār*), meditations (*murāqabāt*) and God-pleasing works (*marḍiyyāt*) as much as he can. Muḥammad Maʿšūm concludes his exhortation (*waṣīyya*) with the request that al-Khajwī may not forget to pray for him in his “pious supplications” and he adds himself a prayer in which he asks God to make his student “a guide and one guided”.

The booklet of Muḥammad Shuʿayb contains next to the translations the Arabic text of the *wird*-litany for the recitation by the Chinese Famen Mujaddidī’s which also includes the names of the masters of the initiatory “golden chain” (*al-silsila al-dhahabiyya*). According to this genealogy, the authorization to initiate novices into the Mujaddidiyya-Maʿšūmiyya order was dispensed by Muḥammad Maʿšūm’s son, Abū l-Sharaf ʿAbdalqādir al-Mujaddidī al-Dihlī al-Madanī al-Makkī, the author of the second *ijāza* (translation 16–19), in Mecca in 1351/1932–1933, to Shams al-Dīn b. Saʿīd al-Khajwī, i.e., the son of Muḥammad Saʿīd.

### 3 Conclusion

Arabic manuscripts produced on the periphery of Islam generally follow the models typical of Arabic manuscript culture. Certifications of text transmission are included in the Yemenī manuscripts as regularly as they are found in the Ottoman ones and commentaries written in the margins of the manuscripts of Chinese origin are as elaborate as those inscribed in codices from Mamluk Egypt. The variation observed, e.g. in didactic poems, is a phenomenon encountered in the Maghribī manuscripts as much as in those written in Mesopotamia, although the repertoire of the texts transmitted in the Maghrib may slightly differ due to the adherence of most of northwest Africa to the Mālikī madhhab.

Many shared features notwithstanding, peripheral Muslim manuscript cultures differ from those of the centre in various ways. In the Maghrib, specific solutions were worked out for the composition of the codex, and the script shows greater deviation from the central Arabic styles when compared to the Arabic script in China, which places the diacritical dots in an identical manner to the “orthodox” Naskhī styles. The Maghribī manuscript culture also differs in the use of colours whose gamut is far broader than in the central Arab lands. As regards Yemenī manuscripts, some micro-texts are highlighted which seem to have been noted on the flyleaves and beginning pages more regularly than in manuscripts of the central Islamic lands. Many legal manuscripts of the Zaydiyya school strike the reader with a certain austerity and their defective pointing of the texts. As is evident from several glosses in the margins of Yemenī manuscripts, the Southern Arabian certification procedures differ in some detail from those



that were practiced in certain other scholarly milieus, e.g. in Ottoman Turkey. Arabic manuscripts made in pre-modern China tended to be written on folded paper for practical reasons, and the *xiaoer jing* type of Arabic-based script used by the indigenous scribes shows the influence of Chinese characters. The latter were used in the margins and between the lines to explain unknown Arabic expressions, alongside with the Chinese language glosses written in Arabic script preferred by the Muslims. The strong presence of the Persian language in traditional Chinese Islamic culture shows itself in Persian terms and glosses found in manuscripts produced in the Middle Kingdom.

The spectrum of variation in Arabic manuscript culture is fascinating and gives the student of Arabic codicology continuous grounds for delight.

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Dmitry Bondarev

# Multiglossia in West African Manuscripts: The Case of Borno, Nigeria<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Introduction

Manuscripts in Arabic and Arabic-based scripts produced in sub-Saharan Africa have long been marginalised by students of Islamic palaeography and codicology. Although the finely illuminated calligraphic manuscripts of Persia, the Middle East, and North Africa attracted the attention of European scholars and collectors (Venetian collectors, for example [Carboni 2007, 19–20, 35]) as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, manuscripts from sub-Saharan Africa rarely reached European collections and libraries. Those few that were available were overshadowed by the colourful calligraphic tradition of the Islamic East.

Until recently, the very notion of “calligraphy” would not have arisen in connection with manuscripts of sub-Saharan origin. In defining and describing the various script types known in Islamic Spain and North and West Africa, scholars could not help avoiding arbitrary or subjective evaluation: “... there is a rather *primitive* type used in West Africa called *Sūdānī*” (James 1980, 109, my italics).<sup>2</sup> Such *a priori* judgements of primitiveness or sophistication are of little help, for they ignore the indigenous aesthetic values of local African writing traditions. In Borno, for example, careful, uniform hands characterised by angular thick strokes were used specifically for the text of the Qur’an and for some “official” documents in local languages, such as genealogical lists and diplomatic correspondence, while more cursive and less careful hands – sometimes very similar to the ordinary writing styles of North Africa and Spain in the period from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century – were used for anything else (see discussion below). This fact clearly indicates that the local writing tradition deliberately applied distinct

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<sup>2</sup> *Sūdānī* means ‘of Sudan origin’, based on the Arabic term *bilād al-Sūdān* ‘the land of the black people’ applied by early Muslim writers to the territories of sub-Saharan Africa which are now known as West Africa (from the Atlantic coast to Modern Sudan).

styles to different types of documents. Even “primitive” *Sūdānī* could vary in accordance with special aesthetic and practical requirements.

Major European exploration of African cultures began only at the time of the Napoleonic wars; by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, it had reached an advanced stage. It is therefore no surprise that, in publications on Islamic palaeography, the first references to sub-Saharan manuscripts appeared soon after the first comprehensive studies of African cultures published from the 1820s to the 1860s (Denham and Clapperton 1826, Koelle 1854a and b, Barth 1862–1866). As early as the 1880s, the writing style of sub-Saharan origin was analysed and classified as *Sūdānī* by Houdas (1886). Subsequent work was nevertheless scarce, and it was not until after the 1960s that manuscripts of sub-Saharan origin again drew attention from scholars working in the field of Islamic palaeography and codicology (Bivar 1968).

The lack of European scholarly interest in the West African Islamic manuscripts is partly explained by the administrative policy of the French and British colonies, and by the rise, in the British colonies, of missionary education. In French West Africa, administrative support for Islamic education early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was soon superseded by the fear of pan-Islamic ideas. In 1911, Arabic (including Arabic-based writing) was banned in judicial and administrative contexts, and Arabic-language publications imported to French West Africa were censored. The attitude of colonial officialdom even worsened during the First World War, when the Ottoman Empire, claiming leadership of world Islam, joined the Central Powers (Harrison 1988, 49–56, Robinson 1997, 572, Stewart 1997, 58–61, Dobronravina 1999, 90). Despite these official trends, some French colonial administrators (the “*administrateurs-ethnologues*”), such as Robert Arnaud, Paul Marty, and Maurice Delafosse, did play a significant role in collecting local Arabic and Ajami literature. However, such scholarly activity was not always in harmony with the mainstream policy – Delafosse, for example, “was more or less banned from the colonies” after 1909 (Amselle and Sibeud 1998).

The development of Latin-based orthographies for the West African languages (which went back to the alphabetic standardisation of the 1850s and was summarised in Lepsius [1855]) also reduced academic incentives for studying manuscript material in local languages written in the Arabic-based script known as Ajami.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Arabic script was adopted by many communities in West Africa, independently of the linguistic affiliation of their languages. These scripts are externally and locally known as Ajami, from Arabic *‘ajam* ‘non-Arabs’ by which medieval Arabs referred both to “incorrect” variants of the Arabic language and to non-Arabic texts in Arabic scripts, like Persian in the Middle East or Spanish and even Latin in Andalusia. The glosses in Arabic manuscripts were often marked as *‘ajamī* or *‘jm*.

The authoritarian inadequacy of colonial administration only added to the negative attitude towards Arabic and Ajami writing. In the British Northern Nigeria Protectorate, as a result of ignorance on the part of Brigadier Lugard, the then High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria (1900–1906), Ajami, which had traditionally been used for Hausa, was considered inappropriate on linguistic grounds, and as a result the Romanization of Hausa took place (Philips 2004). The British colonial administrators nevertheless showed sporadic interest in the local Ajami writing tradition (Dobronravin 1999, 91, Philips 2004, 71). For instance, Richmond Palmer – the Lieutenant-Governor of Northern Provinces of Nigeria from 1925–1930 – collected and described various Arabic and Ajamic manuscripts, one type of which will be considered in the present article.

1960, the Year of Africa – when most of the West African colonies gained independence from France and the United Kingdom – coincided with the publication by A. D. H. Bivar (1960) of a dated Qur'anic manuscript produced in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the Old Borno Sultanate of north-east Nigeria. Bivar's article signalled a return by European scholars to the study of sub-Saharan manuscripts. It was a breakthrough in many ways. First, Bivar reported the discovery of the oldest dated Qur'an manuscript then known in sub-Saharan Africa (1080 AH/1669 CE). Second, he presented three other Qur'anic manuscripts of the Old Borno Sultanate, two of which, on palaeographic grounds, he established were older even than the dated one (both going back to the early 7<sup>th</sup> or late 6<sup>th</sup> centuries). Finally, Bivar discovered that all four Qur'ans had interlinear vernacular glosses written in Ajami, representing Old Kanembu – an archaic variety of Kanuri, a major West African language spoken in north-east Nigeria and around Lake Chad.

Bivar's discovery placed Kanuri as one of the oldest written sub-Saharan languages. Other West African languages known for their ancient Ajami writing tradition include Songhay (the earliest dated text being epigraphic inscriptions in Arabic with some Songhay morphological items, forms of address, and kinship terms on 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>-century marble tombstones in Gao (Moraes Farias 2001, CCXII–CCXV), Tamashek (the earliest written evidence is reported to be 16<sup>th</sup>-century [Gutelius 2000]), Wolof (17<sup>th</sup> century [Dobronravin 199,101]), Fulfulde (of which the earliest written evidence dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Hunwick and O'Fahey 1995, Bobboyi 2008, 124), and Hausa (probably 17<sup>th</sup> century [Yahaya 1988, 31, Philips 2004, 56–7])).

The early adaptations of Arabic script to West African languages came about as a result of the spread of Islam and, consequently, Arabic literacy. The first cultural contacts between the sub-Saharan world with Muslim North Africa go back as far as the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, and different African regions took their Islamic influences from different sources. Although West African Islam shares many common

features across the whole region (such as adherence to the Mālikī school of law with widespread use of Mālikī textbooks *Risāla* by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386/966) and *Mukhtaṣar* by al-Shaykh Khalīl b. Ishāq (d. 767/1366) and popularity of the book about the Prophet, *Kitāb-al-Shifā' bi ta'rīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*, composed by al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (d. 543–4/1149) and an Islamic creed *al-'Aqīda al-Ṣuḡhrā* by Maḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī [d. 895/1490]), there are several distinct traditions which differ from each other in various ways.

One of the salient differences manifests itself in the varieties of Arabic script used for writing Arabic and local languages. All these types, collectively called *Sūdānī*, belong to the *Maghribī* group of the Arabic script typical of the western part of the Muslim world, i.e., Andalusia (before the 15<sup>th</sup> century) and North Africa/Maghreb.

Despite the fact that the first description of sub-Saharan African hands in Arabic script (Houdas 1886) was published more than 120 years ago, with follow-up research undertaken by Bivar (1960, 1968), Dobronravin (1999, 2004), Blair (2006, 2008) and Nobili (2011) the typology of script types in Africa is still in its infancy. Although the amount of manuscript material available for study has increased tremendously in the last forty years, thanks to access to state and private libraries in West Africa (Mali, Niger, Nigeria, etc), Europe and the United States, sub-Saharan manuscript studies still remain a marginal field for Islamic palaeographers (cf. Déroche 2004, 86).<sup>4</sup>

The manuscripts discussed in this article are products of the Kanem-Borno writing tradition. They include the monolingual Kanuri genealogical lists (gargams) of Kanem-Borno rulers collected by Palmer, and the bilingual (Arabic-Old Kanembu) early Borno Qur'anic manuscripts first published by Bivar.

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<sup>4</sup> Different types of sub-Saharan hands possibly match with what Dobronravin (1999, 94) considers distinct regional Ajami writing traditions of West Africa. The breakdown is as follows: 1) Ajami among the western Fulani of the West Sudan (Pulaar area) (modern south Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, and south-west Mali); 2) Ajami among the Soninke (south Mauritania, west Mali, east Senegal); 3) Ajami among the Wolof and Serer (Senegal); 4) Ajami among the Susu (Soso) and Manding, influenced by the western Fulani writing tradition (Guinea, Gambia, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo); 5) Ajami in the Volta river basin and among the Asante (Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Burkina Faso); 6) Ajami among the Songhay and Zarma (Mali and Niger); 7) Ajami of Sokoto and Adamawa mainly in Hausa and eastern dialects of Fula (north and west Nigeria); 8) Ajami in Yorubaland and Nupeland (southwest Nigeria); 9) Ajami of Kanem and Bornu in Saharan (Kanuri) and Chadic (Hausa and others) languages (northeast Nigeria). See Nobili (2011) for an alternative typology of West African script types.

## 2 Kanem-Borno

As is typical of other West African societies, the ancient Kanem and its successor the Borno Sultanate were multilingual polities populated by speakers of Kanembu, Kanuri, Tubu, (all three Saharan languages of the Nilo-Saharan linguistic phylum), Tuareg, Arabic, Buduma (Afro-Asiatic languages), Bilala (a Nilo-Saharan language), Fulfulde (a Niger-Congo language) and many others (map 1). The political and religious history of Kanem-Borno is bound most closely to three languages: Kanembu – the language of Kanem; Kanuri (the *lingua franca* of the Borno Sultanate) and Classical Arabic: the language of Islam and Islamic education.<sup>5</sup>



**Map 1:** Languages of Kanem and Borno

<sup>5</sup> Kanuri is a major Nilo-Saharan language of the Saharan linguistic family, spoken in north-east Nigeria, south-east Niger, north-west Chad, and north Cameroon by about 4 million people. The term Kanuri covers both the western dialect clusters – Kanuri – mainly spoken in Nigeria and Niger and the eastern clusters – Kanembu – mostly spoken in the Republic of Chad. There is no general agreement on whether Kanuri and Kanembu are different languages or dialects.



Kanem originated in the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE to the northeast of Lake Chad. It was a centre of Islam in the historical Central Sudan by the 13<sup>th</sup> century or even earlier. The presence of Islam, which was adopted by the Sayfawa ruling dynasty of Kanem, and the royal court's particularly strong interest in Qur'anic learning in this early period are recorded in various external and local sources.<sup>6</sup> With the development of Qur'anic studies in the ancient Kanem (13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries), Kanembu of the early Kanem period (*Kanem-bu*: 'Kanem-people'/'the Kanem people') became the language of Qur'anic interpretation, evolving into a codified technical language still preserved in modern Kanuri society (see section 4.7 below).

In the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Kanem rulers (*mai*'s) and population moved to the Borno province of Kanem on the western edge of Lake Chad. By the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Borno had become heir in the Lake Chad basin to the Islamic culture of Kanem. The city of Gazargamu (variant spelling Ngazargamu), established as a capital by Sultan 'Alī Gaji b. Dunama (*mai* Ali Dunamami), was the economic, political and religious centre of Borno until its collapse in the Fulani jihad of 1808.

In the course of the Kanem migration to Borno, the western dialects of Kanuri spoken in and around Gazargamu became the *lingua franca* for the vast territories controlled by the Borno Sultanate. As a result, Kanembu dialects of the former Kanem territories east of Lake Chad were marginalised. Kanembu is now spoken by less than 9% of the whole Kanuri-speaking population.<sup>7</sup>

The ruling Sayfawa dynasty of Kanem-Borno was closely linked with the Muslim scholarly community: the '*ulamā*' (plural of Arabic '*ālim* 'a scholar'). The *mai*'s (rulers) granted the '*ulamā*' written charters of privilege (*maḥrams*) which exempted them and their descendants from tax and war service (Bobbayi 1992, 1993). The *maḥrams* were written in Arabic, which was also used in the composition of historical and genealogical accounts such as the chronicle "The Borno expeditions of Idrīs Alauma (1564–1576)" composed by the Grand Imam of Borno Ahmad b. Fartuwa who served at the court of the Sayfawa Sultan Idrīs b. 'Alī (Idrīs Alauma) (Lange 1987) or the *Diwān salatin Barnō* 'Accounts of the Borno Sultans' (Lange 1977). Together with *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *tawhid* (theology) – the standard fields of Islamic study and writing – Arabic was a resource

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<sup>6</sup> For external sources see for example historical accounts by Al-Bakrī (5<sup>th</sup> AH/11<sup>th</sup> CE c.), Yāqūt (7<sup>th</sup> AH/13<sup>th</sup> CE c.), Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī (7<sup>th</sup> AH/13<sup>th</sup> CE c.), Abū al-Fidā' (8<sup>th</sup> AH/14<sup>th</sup> CE c.), Ibn Khaldūn (8<sup>th</sup> AH/14<sup>th</sup> CE c.) in [Levtzion & Hopkins] (1981). Local sources are mainly represented by *Diwan Salatin Borno* (Lange 1977), *maḥrams* (charters of privilege) and *gargams* (genealogical lists) (Palmer 1928, 1936, Lange 1977, 1987, Bobbayi 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Ethnologue's (2014) estimate of Kanembu speakers is 461,000 in 2006.

for “considerable literary activity in the poetry of eulogy, elegy, satire, and pietism” (Hunwick 1997, 211).

Old Kanembu (the language of Kanem) and Kanuri (the language of Borno) also had a long literary tradition of which at present we only know the gargams (genealogical lists), written in Kanuri, and the Old Kanembu commentaries (*tafsir*) on the Qur’an and translations from various Arabic religious texts.

There are no extant manuscripts of the Kanem period and only a few early Borno manuscripts in Old Kanembu, Kanuri, and Arabic have survived. Two major events at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century drastically influenced literary life in Borno, and the survival of sources for the old script culture. First, in 1808, the city of Gazargamu was sacked in the course of the Fulani Jihad. There is evidence that some Qur’anic manuscripts comprising the Arabic and Old Kanembu commentaries were plundered as religious booty,<sup>8</sup> while the non-Qur’anic or manuscripts directly related to the Sayfawa dynasty were most probably destroyed, being considered hostile or impious by jihad leaders. Then, in 1846 the Sayfawa, the ruling Kanem-Borno dynasty, was replaced by the Kanemī dynasty founded by Shehu Mohammad al-Kanemī. From that date on, documents related to the Sayfawa were officially condemned to such an extent that at the time of the Barth expedition in 1851 it was, according to Barth, dangerous to possess the genealogical lists of the displaced dynasty (Lange 1977, 7).<sup>9</sup> These “banned” manuscripts are the subject of the next section.

### 3 Gargams

Gargam (Kanuri *gargâm*, ‘history, legend’), also known in literature as Girgam (Palmer 1928, 1936) is an oral and written genre which represents the genealogical lists of the Sayfawa dynasty, covering about 900 years of successive rulers (*mai*’s). The gargams were most probably based on oral tradition and served as a mnemonic skeleton for fuller and more detailed versions of the chronicles of the

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<sup>8</sup> One of the manuscripts discussed below (MS.4MM) travelled from Borno to the Fulani emirate Gwandu where it has since been handed down in the family of Waziri for many generations (Bivar 1960, 199).

<sup>9</sup> Although, as Lange (1987, 14, n.4) suggests, there is evidence invalidating Barth’s statement in that one of the highest officials of the al-Kānemī dynasty possessed a copy of the mentioned manuscript “The Borno expeditions of Idris Alauma (1564–1576)” composed by Ahmad b. Far-tuwa, who served at the court of the Sayfawa Sultan Idris Alauma.

*mai*'s of Kanem-Borno. This is evident from textual variation attested in survived gargam manuscripts.<sup>10</sup>

The textual structure of gargams is rather simple and plain. Each ruler is briefly described by name, father's name, and the place where he reigned and died. Sometimes, relocation of the court or a significant event associated with a particular *mai*, such as a war or a famine, may deserve a line.<sup>11</sup>

The gargams show an identical formal layout with wide margins. They are written in a careful, sometimes calligraphic hand comparable to the layout of the Qur'anic manuscripts touched on later.

It is not clear when the tradition of written genealogical lists in the form of gargams originated. The only dated gargam was apparently written in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, as is evident from Palmer (1936, 107): "The best list of Mais of Borno now obtainable is dated 1209 AH /1794/5 AD." In his translation of the dated Kanuri gargam, Palmer does not provide the text where he read the date; so it is unclear where the date was put in the original manuscripts and what language it was written in. To the best of my knowledge, all other gargams, mostly collected or copied by Palmer during the two first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, are not dated. On the basis of Palmer's notes about possessors of gargams (Palmer 1928, II, 35, III, 36), it is likely that the written genealogical lists were carefully preserved by local families as old and precious artefacts; which in turn may corroborate an early date for the manuscripts. In the same collection of translations of the Borno manuscripts Palmer (1928, II, 116–18) suggested a date for one such genealogical list, the "Zanua Gargam": "this gargam must date from about the year 1795 or so for *mai* 'Ali Hajimi died in 1793". Since Palmer's argument is only based on the last ruler in the list who indeed died in either in 1793 or, according to Lange (1977, 82), in 1792, the date is no more than a *terminus post quem* which in itself is however helpful when dealing with undated chronicles. The criterion "last ruler in the list" serves well to establish that the gargams I have so far consulted

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Lange (1977, 8) referring to Barth's assumption : "ce mode de composition aurait été inauguré au début du XVI siècle, ... auparavant les informations auraient été transmises oralement."

<sup>11</sup> A more complete type of chronicle with extended accounts of events exists only in a single Arabic manuscript, *Diwān Salātīn Barnū* 'Accounts of the Borno sultans', collected by the famous German explorer Heinrich Barth in 1850's (Lange 1977). It is difficult to ascertain whether these Arabic written chronicles were part of a tradition that recorded the acts of *mai*'s in both Arabic and Kanuri, or individual undertakings by enthusiastic courtiers to write down Kanuri oral histories in Arabic, probably modelled on the comprehensive accounts of *mai* Idrīs Alauma written in Arabic in the 10<sup>th</sup> AH/16<sup>th</sup> CE century by Ahmad b. Fartuwa, mentioned above. The *Diwan* not only differs from gargams in its more detailed descriptions of rulers' lives, but also in the layout and style of the writing. The *Diwan* manuscript was produced without ruling and it almost lacks margins.

were certainly written after the Sayfawa dynasty had come to an end. It is known that the last *mai* ‘Alī Bəra (Ibrāhīm) Gana mentioned at the end of each of these manuscripts died in May 1846 (Brenner 1973, 65–6, Lange 1977, 82). Therefore, the gargams could have been written any time from 1846 to the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Palmer started collecting them. Our knowledge of the codicological and palaeographic features of the surviving gargams is too limited to support a more precise chronological identification. The copies I have examined are photographic reproductions made from black and white microfilms which are useful only for identification of page size, text layout, type of script, and – very uncertainly – condition of paper.<sup>12</sup> The most representative collection of microfilm copies of gargams (from the “Hunwick collection”) is deposited in Department of History, Northwestern University (Evanston, USA). Many of them came from Ibadan University Library in Nigeria. In 1964, according to the records on the order forms, Ibadan University Library loaned original manuscripts from the Jos Museum, Nigeria for microfilming. At that time, the Gargams were part of the so-called “Palmer Papers” collection. When I visited the Jos Museum in December 2006, I could not find any trace of the original manuscripts. Whether they have been lost or transferred to the National Archive of Kaduna, Nigeria is yet to be clarified.

### 3.1 Hunwick collection

I now give a description of the Gargam manuscripts as they are represented by the four copies of the Hunwick collection (catalogued as “Hunwick/No”). The gargams were produced on separate single leaves – a typical West African form of loose-leaf binding. Leaf size varies substantially between manuscripts, from a smaller octavo format of 15 × 11 cm (e.g., H(unwick)/280, H./282) to a larger quarto size: 20 × 16 (H/279) and 23 × 17 cm (H/281).<sup>13</sup> Judging from the contours of the paper as they appear on the microfilm copies, I would assume that MS H/282 is older than others for the simple reason that its corners are oval and slightly torn (a sign of wear) while the corners of the other manuscripts look rectangular and less worn, which indirectly, may indicate a later period of production. But sharper corners could also be well explained by better conditions of preservation, and hence are of little use in relative dating.

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<sup>12</sup> These copies were generously provided by Prof. John Hunwick of Northwestern University in 1999.

<sup>13</sup> This Gargam was published by Palmer (1913, 78–83) with an inaccurate Latin-based transcription and what, in many cases is an erroneous English translation.

### 3.2 Layout and script

All gargams have a distinctive layout (Figure 1). The text is written in vertically arranged rectangular blocks with wide margins: it runs from 11–14 lines on a smaller page to 14–16 lines on the larger leaves. MS. H/282 shows the greatest regularity: it has 11 lines per page except on the last (f.6v) where the twelfth line was most probably deemed the last line of the whole composition. This is evident from the elongated form of the final word <*kargō*><sup>14</sup> ‘he lived’ (a stretched line between the letters *ghayn* and *wāw*), which was written for visual symmetry to fill the width of the text block (Figure 2). Text lines are almost perfectly even and straight in all four manuscripts, with only MS. H/279 showing less careful columnation. This may suggest that the scribes used a ruling frame (Ar. *miṣṭara*, see an example of a ruling board used in Timbuktu in Hunwick and Jay Boye 2008, 98).

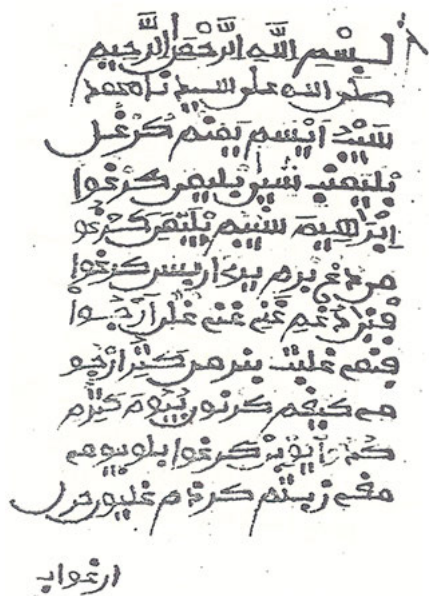


Fig. 1: The opening page of a Borno Gargam (genealogical list), Evanston, Northwestern University, Hunwick collection, MS. H/280.

<sup>14</sup> Angular brackets <> are used for graphic representation. In Old Kanembu data, a macron (ˉ) above the vowel represents the so-called “weak” letters used in Classical Arabic for representation of long vowels, but used for high and falling tone in Old Kanembu. High tone in Kanuri is indicated with an acute accent (e.g. *á*), low tone is unmarked, and falling with circumflex (*â*).

اَمِير تَبَرْمِيه مِيه اَمَمَ وَنَز  
 سَسَسُو كَرَنُوز كَرُغُوا  
 مِيه قَمِ نَكُر كِيَلَم يَلَس  
 وَد قَدُور مَم قَمِ نِيَمِيه شِل م  
 كَلُور م قَنَسُوم قَنَسُوا اَمِر  
 تَبَرْمِيه مِيه مَعَم وَنَز  
 بَلَكُو بَر كَرُغُوا مِيه قَلَم  
 بَر نَم مَلُور اَمَنَسَر قَلَكُرَنُوز  
 كَرُغُوا مِيه بَر اَبِيه بَر اَمَنَسَر  
 بَر كَرُوا كَرُون كَرُغُوا اَلَم  
 مِيه عَلِم لَلُوم عَلِم بَر عَلِم مَسَر  
 كَايَ رُوز كَرُغُوا

Fig. 2: The last page of the Gargam. The last word is elongated to fill the width of the text. Evanston, Northwestern University, Hunwick collection, MS.H/282.



The gargams start with a *basmalah* – the traditional opening, so called by the first three words of the invocation *bi’smi Allāhi (ar-rahmān ar-rahīm)* ‘in the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate’. The manuscripts do not have colophons in the sense of additional information about the text, writer, date etc., but there is always a kind of “tail”, such as elongated shape of the word mentioned above in relation to MS. H/282, or Borno Arabic *kumila bi ‘awn-allāh* ‘finished with God’s help’ as in MS. H/281, or the last word written in a separate line in the left corner of the text block followed by the smaller script Arabic word *kumila* ‘finished’ below that last word.<sup>15</sup> These help to visually identify the end of the composition.

The gargam manuscripts have no punctuation. New sentences start immediately after the final word of the preceding sentence: a common practice in *Maghribī* and sub-Saharan manuscripts. In West Africa, the “zero punctuation” principle existed together with marked sentence- or passage-division. Dividing marks include a “three-dot” symbol for sentence separation, or division by red colour used on the first word of the new passage. Neither of these is attested in the gargams, though colour punctuation should not be ruled out until coloured copies are available for inspection.

Indication of page order is supplied by catchwords written below the bottom line of the text and copying the first word(s) of the following folio. They are of a slightly smaller size than the main text and, as is typical of many West African manuscripts, they run parallel to it – a practice that originated in the Maghreb in the pre-9<sup>th</sup> AH/15<sup>th</sup> CE century (Déroche 2006, 97).

The arrangement of catchwords is by no means the only archaic feature of the written gargams. As part of the Kanem-Borno Ajami tradition classified above as “type 7”, gargams are characterised by a distinctive script type related to an old *Magribī/Andalusī* style of Arabic script used in North Africa and Spain from the 5<sup>th</sup> AH/11<sup>th</sup> CE to the 8<sup>th</sup> AH/14<sup>th</sup> CE century. I will expand on this issue below in the section on the Borno Qur’anic manuscripts, because they are available in colour and therefore more adequately represent the real palaeographic characteristics of Kanem-Borno Ajami writing.

The manuscripts are not based on a written archetype. This is evident from different order of rulers’ succession and lack of orthographic conventions. For example, the place name Gazargamu – the most famous city in the Borno history – is written differently in four gargams: MS. H/279: <*gasarkmo*>, MS. H/280: <*gazarkmo*>, MS. H/281: <*gazarkomo*>, and MS. H/282: <*qasargmo*>.

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<sup>15</sup> The Borno Arabic form *kumila* is a variant of the Classical Arabic *kammala* ‘finished’. This reading is found in bilingual Borno manuscripts (e.g. in *al-‘Aqīda al-Ṣuḡhrā*, the collection of Dr Kyari Sherif, Maiduguri). Cf. modern Shuwa (Nigerian) Arabic: *kimil(a)* as intransitive of *kammal(a)* ‘finished’ (Jonathan Owens, p.c.)



Interestingly, the word <*kargō*> ‘he lived’ is written identically across all gargams. Difference in the spelling of Gazargamu may serve as independent linguistic evidence – in addition to the “last ruler” principle – that the gargams were written after it was destroyed in 1808 and its educated circles – who might have agreed on a conventional spelling of the city’s name – dispersed all across Borno territory. Variation in place names, but unity in the verbal form <*kargō*>, may also point to the oral origin of the gargams (i.e., they were written down as heard) and their relatively recent existence in manuscript form after 1808.

### 3.3 Language

In his publications (1913, 1928, 1936) of material on the history of Kanem-Borno, Palmer claimed some gargams were written in Kanuri and others in Kanembu. Subsequent scholarship has not questioned his identification. For example, Nur Alkali (1987, 2–3), presented excerpts from two gargams as illustrations of Kanuri and Kanembu writing, one in Kanuri, and the other in Kanembu, both quoted from Palmer (1928).

A closer examination of the language of the gargam manuscripts suggests that it is an archaic variety of Kanuri spoken most probably in and around the old Borno capital Birni Gazargamu, which was founded by *mai* Ali Dunamami in 1488 and destroyed during the Fulbe jihad in 1808. This interpretation is not conclusive because of the paucity of linguistic data available in the gargams. As mentioned before, their content is restricted to the names of *mai*’s, and the places where they lived or were buried. A typical gargam sentence consists of a subject (i.e., the name of *mai* N) modified by an apposition (i.e., ‘son of X’), a place name with a locative marker (= ‘in P’) and a predicate, almost always the verb <*kargō*> ‘he lived’ (a past tense of the verb *dāga* ‘live’).

MS. H/281 f.2v

|              |                    |                 |                     |                |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| < <i>may</i> | ’ <i>āli</i> (sic) | <i>dnama-mi</i> | <i>gazarakomo-n</i> | <i>kargō</i> > |
| mai (ruler)  | Ali                | Dunama-son.of   | Gazargamu-in        | he.lived       |

*mai* Ali, son of Dumama, he lived in Gazargamu

Notwithstanding such restricted data, three diagnostic items help to identify the language of gargams as belonging to Kanuri (i.e. the western dialect cluster) rather than to Kanembu (the eastern dialect cluster). First, the third-person singular independent pronoun *shi* ‘he/she’ is used throughout all gargam texts. Secondly, there is the locative marker *-n*, ‘in’; finally there is the past-tense verbal

form <*kargō*> ‘he lived’. These items are identical with the corresponding data in Gazar, a Kanuri dialect of the late 18th century spoken in the area of Birni Gazargamu. Gazar, as spoken by a Kanuri Ali Aisami in his late 60s, was documented in the 1830s by the German missionary and linguist Sigismund Koelle (Koelle 1854a, 73). Two of these items – <*shi*> ‘s/he’ and <*n*> ‘in’ – are phonetically and morphologically different from the corresponding data (i.e., <*ti*> ‘s/he’ and <*-lan*> ‘in’) of written Old Kanembu texts (which are represented only by the Qur’anic manuscripts discussed later). The verbal form <*kargō*> is likewise not attested in the Borno Qur’ans.

## 4 Bilingual Borno manuscripts

The Borno Qur’anic manuscripts differ from the gargams in almost every aspect, including language, content, function, period of production, and historical continuity. The only shared features are the script type and, to an extent, the page layout.

Unlike the gargams, the Borno Qur’ans have intensively been studied from the perspectives of various disciplines, including codicology and palaeography (Bivar 1960, 1968, 2007; Bondarev 2006a, Blair 2008), linguistics (Bondarev 2005, 2006a, 2008, 2013, 2014), and Qur’anic/Islamic studies (Mustapha 1987, Bondarev 2006b, Al-Achtar and Bondarev 2008, Bondarev 2013a, forthcoming). In this section, I draw on this research to describe some salient features of the manuscripts and their content.

### 4.1 Collection

The microfilm and digital collection of Borno bilingual manuscripts on which this account is based (inventory number MS. 380808) was founded in 2003–2007 at the School of Oriental and African Studies. In 2003, David Bivar donated to SOAS Library black and white microfilms of the four incomplete Qur’an manuscripts that had been the object of his initial 1960 and 1968 publications.<sup>16</sup> This corpus consisted of 230 folios in photographic and microfilm form, subsequently all digi-

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<sup>16</sup> David Bivar took photographs of these Qur’ans in 1958–59 in northern and north-east Nigeria, on behalf of the Nigerian Antiquities Department which at that time was based in Jos. Only some of the original negative microfilms of these manuscripts are still deposited in the Jos Museum Library. Others have probably been lost (my field work data, 2006).

tised. In 2005–07, in the course of fieldwork carried out in northern Nigeria by Abba Isa Tijani and myself, the corpus of digitized manuscripts was increased to more than 4600 folios, including four more Qur'an copies and fourteen other bilingual (Arabic and Old Kanembu) manuscripts.<sup>17</sup> The collection now spans a period of about 500 years, from the oldest manuscripts found by Bivar, which include the so called "Shettima Kagu Qur'an" (MS. 2ShK) possibly created in the 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries; the "Imam Ibrahim Qur'an" (MS. 3ImI) with Arabic commentary (tafsir) on the Qur'an finished on 1st Jumadi II 1080 AH, equivalent to 26th October, CE 1669; the "Malam Muhammadu Qur'an" (probably early to middle 17<sup>th</sup> century); and the "Yerima Mustafa Qur'an" (late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>18</sup> All four manuscripts are believed to have been written in or around the old Borno capital of Birni Gazargamu, although some linguistic evidence counters this assumption (see discussion on the language of the glosses in section 4.6).

The rest of the collection belongs to a later period. The manuscripts date from approximately the 18<sup>th</sup> to the late 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and were created in different places in northern Nigeria, from Katsina in the northwest to Maiduguri in the northeast. One text – a translation of a famous traditional Arabic grammar (*Naḥw Ajurrūmiyya*) into Old Kanembu – was written only recently, in 2007, by Imam Habib Ali of Maiduguri.

## 4.2 Paper

The manuscripts were kept unbound in loose folios. This practice changed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with wide introduction of European sewn notebooks; therefore, more recent non-Qur'an manuscripts take the form of notebooks or folded folios.

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<sup>17</sup> In November 2005, one of the four initial manuscripts, the "Yerima Mustafa Qur'an", was expanded to a complete Qur'an (724 pages) by means of digital reproduction made from a Nigerian original which was in possession of the late Yerima Mukhtar Mustapha, the Waziri (Vizier) of Borno. In 2010, I photographed MS.4MM (435 digital pages) which is now in possession of Abdullahi Umar, the Vizier of Kebbi, north-east Nigeria. I am grateful to the Vizier for permission to photograph and reproduce MS.4MM. The manuscript is incomplete and the initial quarter of it is in very poor condition, many leaves being glued together because of water damage. In 2013, during my visit to Jos, I photographed MS.3ImI (620 digital pages) which had been found in the Jos Museum Library by Michael Biddle in 2011. Unfortunately, I was unable to find the original of the fourth Qur'an – MS.2ShK – which was shown to Bivar in Borno. The families who possessed MS.2ShK believe the manuscript has been lost.

<sup>18</sup> Another document relevant to this period is a composite copy of the Qur'an deposited in the Bibliothèque National de France (N334 Arab 402), eleven folios of which (248v–253v) represent a bilingual Arabic – Old Kanembu manuscript of 17<sup>th</sup> century (Déroche 1985, 48).

The early four Qur'ans were written on large paper of folio size which is approximately equal in all four manuscripts (about 34 cm × 21.5–25.5 cm). The edges of the leaves show signs of wear, and the manuscripts are no longer their original size.

The two Qur'an copies produced in Katsina from approximately the 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the other non-Qur'anic manuscripts on loose leaves are written on smaller format paper, usually quarto size (approximately 21 cm × 15 cm).

It is unclear what type of paper was used in (possibly the oldest) MS.2ShK manuscripts. Paper characteristics such as chain-lines and watermarks or countermarks might be helpful in identifying an approximate date of paper production and, hence, in dating.<sup>19</sup> But this task becomes very difficult without direct inspection of the originals. Having applied the “virtual restoration” approach (DIAMM 2008) to the chain-line patterns in the early Borno Qur'ans published by Bivar, I earlier suggested (Bondarev 2007), that MS.2ShK might have been written on an old variety of Oriental paper produced between the eleventh and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, but this assumption needs further investigation.

The dated MS.3ImI was written on Italian paper with a “tre lune” watermark. Thus, this is the earliest documented record of the “tre lune” paper used in sub-Saharan Africa, dating back to earlier than 1080/1669 (the year of completion indicated in the colophon of the manuscript).

MS.4MM also displays a “tre lune” watermark (and no countermarks) in a heavy glossy paper with density of laid lines at 20 lines per 30mm, and chain lines positioned at regular 30mm intervals. It is nevertheless impossible to date the paper basing only on these features because various Italian tre lune papers were produced from the 16<sup>th</sup> century until 1900, with the majority of them without countermarks (Michaelle Biddle, p.c., see also Briquet 1907, 314–5, Nikolaev 1954, 64, Eineder 1960, 88). On the other hand, I could have overlooked the counter-

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<sup>19</sup> ‘Chain lines’ are the imprints left on paper by the cords (of reed, bamboo, grass-stalk etc.) used for cross-fixing the main supporting cords (called “wire or laid lines”) in the mould over which the paper pulp is poured and then allowed to dry. The spacing of chain lines and density and thickness of wire lines may provide approximate chronological information for Islamic manuscripts, which are otherwise only rarely dated (Humbert 1998). Another, better-known means of paper identification are watermarks used by the paper manufacturers as a kind of “logo” or identification. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century (the period closest to our oldest manuscript 2ShK), the scribes of the Maghreb and Ottoman Empire (linked to Borno by trade and religious routes (Martin 1969, 1972) used both non-watermarked Oriental paper produced in the Middle East and watermarked European paper, although the latter had started to dominate the paper market by the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Déroche 2006, 57). If a manuscript is written on non-watermarked paper, or the watermarks cannot be seen for various reasons, only chain and laid lines serve as evidence for the possible origin of the paper and the date of its production.

marks because I only had two hours (before sunset) to photograph and examine the whole manuscript. Judging from the overall palaeographic look of the MS.4MM I would rather agree with Bivar who suggested a 17<sup>th</sup> century date. Interestingly, a Maghribī manuscript dated 1692 (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ar.4226) has tre lune paper with a countermark VG and trefoil that was produced in 1660s (Nikolaev 1954, N230). This paper shows great similarity to the paper used for MS.4MM.

MS.1YM was written on paper resembling that of MS.4MM, i.e., with the same density of laid lines (20 lines per 30mm) and 30mm spacing between the chain lines. However, I could not find any watermarks or countermarks when I was inspecting the manuscript in situ in 2005 and 2009.

### 4.3 Layout

Page layout is defined by several features: the arrangement of the text against the margins, the number of lines per page, the structure and means of text division, and manuscript ornamentation. Manuscripts like the Borno bilingual collection, which have multiple contents, have multiple layout structures. Three separate text arrangements must be clearly differentiated in the Qur'anic manuscripts. These are (a) the main text – the Qur'an, (b) the translation of the Qur'an into Old Kanembu, and (c) commentaries on the Qur'an in Arabic.

#### a) The main text: Qur'an

While the number of lines and the width of margins at the side, top, and bottom of the page are all manuscript-specific features (see Bondarev 2006a, 118–123), internal text divisions, often ornamental in character, are to an extent typical of all Maghribī manuscripts of the Qur'an. Features common in most *Maghribī* Qur'anic manuscripts (see discussions in Déroche 2004, 67–96, 2006, 233–236) include the rectangular and/or rounded decorations in *sūra al-fātiha* (the first chapter of the Qur'an) and at the beginning of *sūra al-baqara* (the second and longest chapter); trefoils (three petals) in red ink for verse separation; triangle-shaped sign called *khamisa* 'five' (represented by the isolated Arabic letter *hā'* that has a numerical value of 5) outlined in colour but filled in black, used for every fifth verse; and roundels for every tenth verse. On the other hand, in Borno these typical features acquired a distinctive style renowned for the diversity of asymmetrical ornamental motifs in rectangular and roundel shapes used for internal text division (see Figure 3); also cf. Brockett's 1987, 46–47 description of a similar Borno-type manuscript.





Fig. 3: Borno Qur'an. The beginning of the second chapter *sūrah al-baqara*. Rectangular and roundel shapes used for internal text division. London, SOAS, Photographic and digital collection MS. 380808, MS.25HK.

#### b) Translation of the Qur'an into Old Kanembu

Glosses in Old Kanembu are usually positioned interlineally, parallel to the main text in earlier manuscripts and diagonal in later copies. They are typically written above the corresponding Qur'anic text, but not necessarily aligned with it. As a general rule, interlinear glosses represent two levels of translation of the original Qur'anic Arabic: morpheme and word-for-word translations. Marginal glosses are also common, and used mainly for the third level of translation: i.e., phrase or sentence translation of either the Qur'anic text or (less commonly) an Arabic commentary (*tafsīr*). Both interlineal and marginal glosses may be written upside down, which indirectly points to the function of the bilingual manuscripts (see section 4.5 below). There are two correction signs used for writing in Old Kanembu. One is an “insertion” marker for pointing to the place in the Qur'anic text where the glosses should be read (the upper part of the letter ‘*ain*’ (ع), an abbreviation of ‘*alāmat al-raj' ila al-hāmish*’ ‘mark pointing to the margin’ (cf. Gacek 2007, 222); another is a “linker” marker used for connecting two separate lines of a gloss into one phrase or sentence.

#### c) Arabic annotations to the Qur'an (*tafsīr*)

Arabic *tafsīr* in the Borno Qur'ans is in essence a compilation of quotations from various authoritative treatises (Al-Achtaṛ and Bondarev 2008, Bondarev forthcoming). They are normally positioned in compact or elongated blocks, generally in the margins. Long passages of commentary normally circle round the Qur'anic text. Arabic annotations may also appear interlineally, resulting in textual interactions between the separate commentaries in Arabic and Old Kanembu. In MS.2ShK and MS.3ImI, for example, this worsens the legibility of each text (Figure 4). The marginal text blocks frequently have their sides aligned, a technique used to set different quotations apart. The end of the quoted passage is usually signalled by the Arabic *ṣaḥḥa* ‘verified’ (Figure 5) or by a “three dots” mark.

The Qur'an text, Old Kanembu glosses, and the *tafsīr* were not created in a single act of copying. The manuscript consisted at first only of the sacred text, with the glosses and *tafsīr* added later in the life-cycle of the book by various hands. The incorporation of secondary texts was possible due to wide margins with ample space between the lines of the Qur'anic text (see Figure 6).

## 4.4 Script

The Qur'an text is written with diacritical marks (‘pointing’) for vowels – an invariable feature across the Islamic world. Like the Qur'an text, the Old Kanembu glosses are also fully vocalised. These assist the reader in distinguishing between



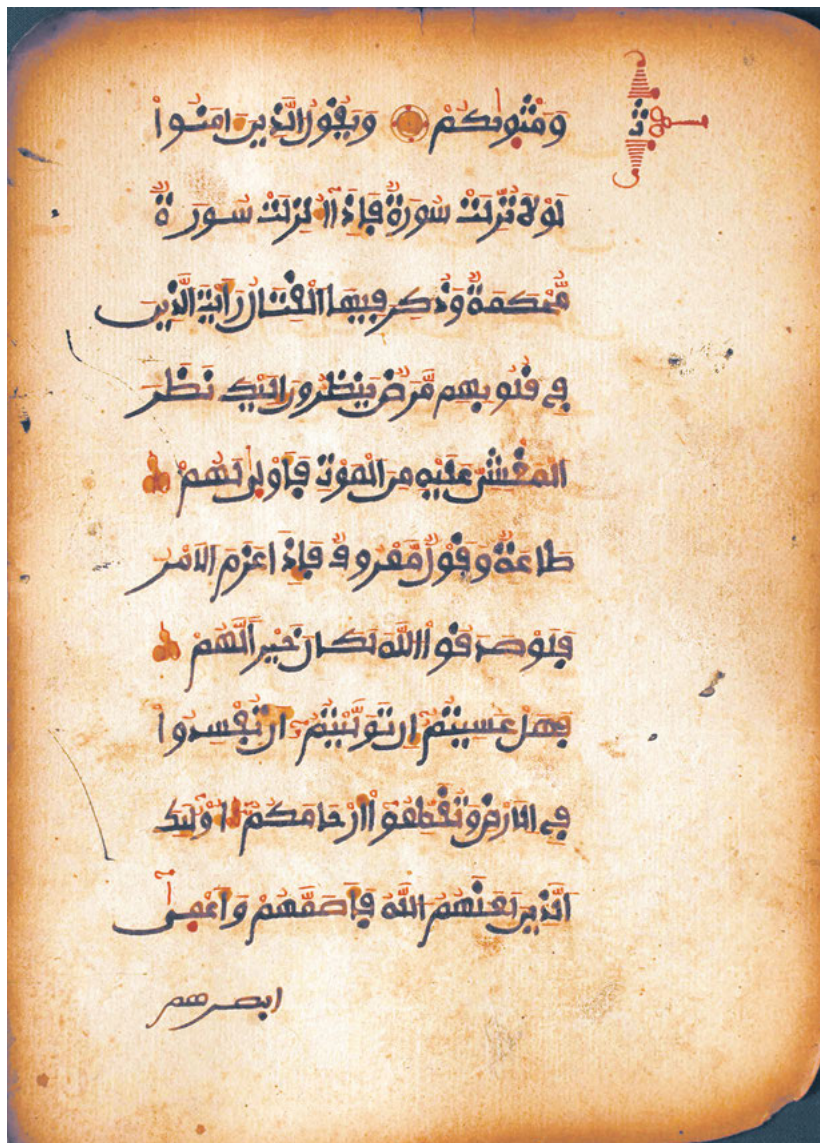


**Fig. 4:** Borno Qur'an. The first chapter *sūra al-fātiha*. Interactions between the separate commentaries in Arabic and Old Kanembu. London, SOAS, Photographic and digital collection MS. 380808, MS.3Im1.



Fig. 5: Borno Qur'an. The second chapter *sūra al-baqara*, verse 33. The marginal text blocks have their sides aligned. The end of the quoted passage is signalled by the Arabic *ṣaḥḥa* 'verified'. London, SOAS, Photographic and digital collection MS. 380808, MS.25hK.





**Fig. 6:** Qur'an. Composite volume produced by Kanuri-speaking *‘ulamā’* in Hausa-speaking Katsina (NAK). Dated 1117/1705. These three folios demonstrate three separate text arrangements, i.e., (6a) the Qur'anic text, (6b) the Qur'anic text with Old Kanembu glosses, and (6c) The Qur'an, Old Kanembu and Arabic commentary (*tafsir*). The incorporation of secondary texts was possible due to wide margins with ample space between the lines of the Qur'anic text. Kaduna, National Archives of Nigeria (NAK), MS.AR33. (a) The Qur'anic text with wide margins. No annotations. Kaduna, NAK, MS.AR33, f. 476v.



Fig. 6: (b) Old Kanembu annotations added between the lines of the main Qur'anic text. Kaduna, NAK, MS.AR33, f.265v.

the Old Kanembu commentaries and those in Arabic, the latter being exclusively non-vocalised in the manner typical of standard Arabic script. Non-vocalised Arabic commentaries are predominantly written by confident hands unlike Old Kanembu glosses which are usually penned by unsteady hands (like in MS.1YM and MS.3ImI). The differences in letter-forms and general style between Old





Fig. 6: (c) Arabic commentary (*tafsir*) in rectangular blocks written after Old Kanembu annotations were added. Kaduna, NAK, MS.AR33, f.364v.

Kanembu glosses and Arabic annotations may indicate that the Old Kanembu texts were written by students, and the Arabic commentaries by teachers or people with advanced knowledge in *tafsir* studies.

All manuscripts in the collection belong to an ancient calligraphic tradition characterised by heavy and angular strokes, and by distinctive letter-shapes and pointing (Bivar 1960, 1968, Bondarev 2006a). Bivar (1968) suggested that the Borno writing tradition represents the ‘*Ifriqī*’ style,<sup>20</sup> so called by Ibn Khaldūn, the North African historian of the 4<sup>th</sup> century who wrote that the old angular *Ifriqī* script known in North Africa was being replaced by a more delicate (*Maghribī*) *Andalusī* script brought by the Spanish Muslims escaping the Reconquista. According to Ibn Khaldūn, the old *Ifriqī* script was preserved in the Sahara in south-western Tunisia. Bivar (1968, 9) suggested that the old *Ifriqī* style was also preserved south of the Sahara in the Sahel with the earliest attestation known in the Borno Qur’ans. In my earlier publications (Bondarev 2006a, 2006b, and 2007) I followed Bivar’s definition. Stanley (1999a, 32–34), however, criticised this view arguing that the Borno script style was a member of the *Maghribī* group of scripts whereas *Ifriqī* was distinct from both. Blair (2008, 66) has further supported these arguments and shown that “the script used in the Qur’an manuscripts from West Africa... shares many characteristics with the western *Maghribī* style used in Morocco and Andalusia.” In 2008, I had the opportunity to compare the Borno Qur’ans with a number of *Maghribī/Andalusī* manuscripts (of 6<sup>th</sup> AH/12<sup>th</sup> CE to 11<sup>th</sup> AH/17<sup>th</sup> CE-century date) in the Chester Beatty Library (CBL), Dublin, and I now accept the view of Stanley and Blair on the close relationship between the *Maghribī* hands and the Borno writing tradition. However, contra Blair (2008, 69), I maintain the view that Borno variety did not derive directly from the *Maghribī* type of script, but rather from their common “Kufic”, or the early ‘*Abbasīd*’ (Déroche 2006, 216), ancestor as suggested by Bivar (1968). For lack of space, I can only briefly summarise the results of this comparison.

Many graphic and stylistic features of the angular calligraphic script of the Qur’an text in the Borno manuscripts are similar to corresponding features of the script of the miniature *Maghribī/Andalusī* Qur’ans of the 6<sup>th</sup> AH/12<sup>th</sup> CE – 17<sup>th</sup> AH/13<sup>th</sup> CE centuries, such as manuscripts CBL Is.1443, Is.1444, Bibliothèque Nationale de France Arabe 386 (Déroche 2004, 82), and especially a miniature Qur’an in a more angular hand produced in Valencia in 1199–1200. The most salient features include angular elongated letters *kāf*, *ṭā’/ḍā’* (with a slanted ascender, cf. the same feature in the Borno MS.3ImI, Figure 4), *ṣād/ḍād* (without a “touth” as typical of all *Maghribī* hands), and flat-ending final *tā’/bā’* (the

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<sup>20</sup> In Arabic, *ifriqī* means ‘from *Ifriqiya*’, the region roughly corresponding to modern day Tunisia and western Algeria.





**Fig. 7:** Many graphic and stylistic features of the angular calligraphic script of the Qur'an text in the Borno manuscripts are similar to corresponding features of the script of the miniature Maghribi/Andalusi Qur'ans of the 6th/12th-7th/13th centuries. (a) Qur'an copied in Borno, 11th/17th or 12th/18th century. Konduga, private collection, MS.5 Konduga, f.12r.



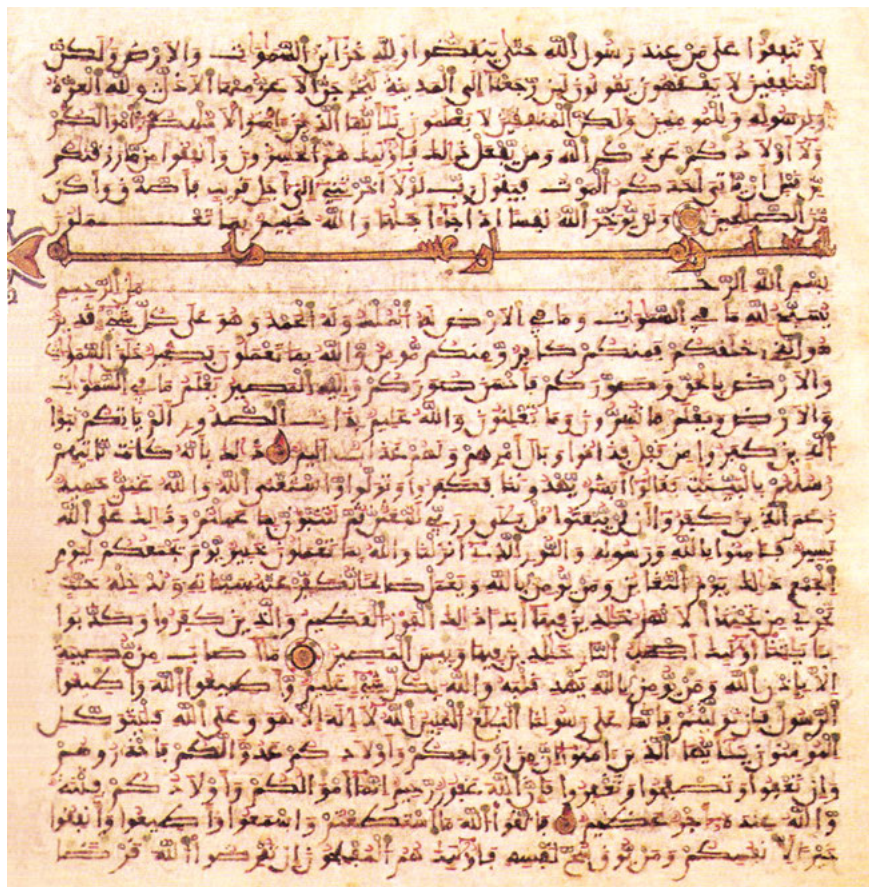


Fig. 7: (b) Qur'an copied in Valencia in 596/1199–1200. London, N. D. Khalili collection of Islamic art, QUR318, f.111a. Courtesy of The Khalili Family Trust.

feature only found in the “Valencia Qur’an” MS. Khalili.QUR318 (see Figure 7).<sup>21</sup> Angularity in *Maghribi* script copies of the Qur’anic text is not restricted to earlier times. Qur’an copies created as late as the 10<sup>th</sup> AH/16<sup>th</sup> CE–11<sup>th</sup> AH/17<sup>th</sup> CE centuries in Morocco during the Sa’di dynasty show a thickness and angularity of strokes very much comparable with the Borno hands. Importantly, the Moroc-

21 MS. Khalili.QUR318 has also been reproduced in James 1992, 95 and Blair 2006, 225.



**Fig. 8:** Less angular Qur'an hands and various non-Qur'an hands in Borno Qur'ans are very close to the Maghribi scripts of many non-Qur'an manuscripts produced from the 9th/15th to the 11th/17th centuries. (a) The Borno Qur'an MS. 1YM (late 11th/17th to early 12th/18th century) with Arabic *tafsir* written in the margins. *Sura al-'insan*. Note similarity between the flexible Qur'an and *tafsir* hands on the one hand and a typical varieties of the Marghribi hand in Fig. 8b. London, SOAS, Photographic and digital collection MS. 380808, MS. 3lml.





Fig. 8: (b) Al-Mista'inī, by Yūnus b. Ishāq b. Beklāresh al-Isrā'īlī. A treatise on simple drugs. Attributed to the 10th/16th century. Dublin, CBL, Ar. 4506, f.2v. © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

can Qur'an reproduced in Stanley 1999b, 46 features final *nūn* without a dot – a common graphic characteristic of the Borno manuscripts.<sup>22</sup>

The Qur'an manuscripts are largely considered a “specific palaeographic domain” (Déroche 2006, 218) because they employ script styles different from non-Qur'anic hands. In the case of Borno Qur'ans however, this distinction is not always relevant because the hands of Arabic annotations are sometimes identical to those of the main Qur'an texts (see Figures 4, 5, and 6c). On average, less angular Qur'an hands and various non-Qur'an hands of Arabic annotations represent a baseline style typical of the entire Borno writing tradition. These flexible Borno hands are very close and sometimes almost identical to the *Maghribī* scripts of many non-Qur'an manuscripts produced from the 9<sup>th</sup> AH/15<sup>th</sup> CE to the 11<sup>th</sup> AH/17<sup>th</sup> CE centuries, such as CBL Ar.4440 (9<sup>th</sup> AH/15<sup>th</sup> CE century), Ar.4493 (10<sup>th</sup> AH/16<sup>th</sup> CE century), Ar.4506 (10<sup>th</sup> AH/16<sup>th</sup> CE century),<sup>23</sup> Ar.4507 (11<sup>th</sup> AH/17<sup>th</sup> CE century), Ar.4509 (11<sup>th</sup> AH/17<sup>th</sup> CE century), Ar.4557 (dated 981/1573), and Ar.4946 (9<sup>th</sup> AH/15<sup>th</sup> CE century) (Figure 8). All these manuscripts randomly demonstrate graphemes that constitute distinctive features of the Borno hands, such as unpointed final *nūn*, elongated final *kāf*, etc.

There are not so many graphic features in the Borno hands that are not found in varieties of the *Maghribī* script. The only distinctive feature attested across all *Maghribī* hands but not present in the Borno manuscripts is the isolated *tā' marbūṭa* (ة) shaped as inverted coma (contrasting with a circle shape in the Borno hands). However, unlike the *Maghribī* hands that show considerable variation, the Borno scribal tradition is very conservative and strikingly uniform at the level of graphemic representation of the script. This relative homogeneity of the Borno hands challenges Blair's (2008, 69) assumption that they derive directly from the *Maghribī* script of around the 6<sup>th</sup> century. It is highly unlikely that the Borno scribes at that time only selected one particular set of the *Maghribī* script which, together with its distinctive traits, would consistently have unpointed *nūn*, flat fianl *tā'/bā'*, long final *kāf* and some other subtleties typical of the Borno hand but only occasionally found in the *Maghribī* script. Essentially, there is no single *Maghribī* manuscript which would exhibit all graphic features typical of Borno. Outside Borno, these “Borno type” features are dispersed geographically across the whole Maghreb and North Africa and, chronologically, they span a period

<sup>22</sup> Unpointed final *nūn* is also attested in other *Maghribī* Qur'ans, one attributed to the 18<sup>th</sup> AH/14<sup>th</sup> CE century (London, N. D. Khalili collection of Islamic Art, QUR672, reproduced in James 1992, 224–5) and the other two to the 10<sup>th</sup> AH/16<sup>th</sup> CE century (Berlin, Museum für islamische Kunst, Inv.NrJ7163, reproduced in Déroche 2004, 94) and Dublin, CBL, Is. 1522.

<sup>23</sup> Catalogued as 16<sup>th</sup>-century; confusingly, however, the watermark and countermark on some folios appear 300 years later in date (ca. 1839 according to Nikolaev 1954)

from the 6<sup>th</sup> AH/12<sup>th</sup> CE to the 11<sup>th</sup> AH/17<sup>th</sup> CE century. Since these “Borno type” features cannot be narrowed down to a certain variant of the *Maghribī* hands, it is impossible to trace the Borno hand back to a single *Maghribī* source. It is this contrast between the diversity of the *Maghribī* graphic features and the uniform character of the Borno hands that points to a source different from *Maghribī* script, but related to the both at the prototype level. One possible script that could be their common prototype is the early ‘*Abbasīd* (Kufic) script from which both the *Maghribī* and Borno must have been transmitted. This chain of transmission was already suggested by Bivar (1968) but he placed *Ifriqī* script (survived in some 5<sup>th</sup> AH/11<sup>th</sup> CE century manuscripts from al-Qayrawān in modern day Tunisia [Stanley 1999a, 33, Déroche 2004, 49, 70]) as an intermediate stage of the development of the Borno hand. Since the *Ifriqī* type does not share graphic features with the Borno hand in the way that the *Maghribī* does, it is implausible to postulate an *Ifriqī* link in this process of transmission. We do not know any other script type which would be closer to the West African style than *Maghribī* is, and therefore it is reasonable to consider the Borno hand to be part of the *Maghribī* scripts (as suggested by Stanley 1999a and Blair 2008). The question will remain as to what kind of Kufic/the early ‘*Abbasīd* was their common source.

## 4.5 Function

The simple fact that the Borno Qur’ans are abundantly filled with Arabic and Old Kanembu annotations in different hands signals that the manuscripts served multiple purposes. Their layout, characterised by wide margins and generously spaced lines, indicates that the main text – the Qur’an – was written with the view to allowing room for annotation (see Figure 6). As mentioned before, the glosses in Old Kanembu are often written upside down. This probably reflects their use in teaching, placed between teacher and the student. All these characteristics suggest that these manuscripts had an educational function, and were applied to the studying and teaching of the Qur’an. This is fully supported by a passage in one of the Arabic annotations found on the last folio (recto) of MS.3ImI (Figure 9):

‘Abū ‘Ubayd narrated on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ūd that he said, ‘Free the Qur’an and do not mix it with anything else.’ It was narrated on the authority of Ibrāhīm that he disliked [writing] commentaries on the Qur’an, and Mālik said, ‘There is no harm in this [writing commentaries] in the copies of the Qur’an used to teach the youth...’ (Al-Achtaṛ and Bondarev 2008).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The quotation is taken from the book *al-taḥbīr fī ‘ilm al-tafsīr* ‘The composition on *tafsīr* studies’ by the famous Egyptian scholar al-Suyūṭī (849/1445–911/1505).





Fig. 9: Qur'an. Last chapter *sūra an-nās*. At the end of the main text there is a four line quotation from the book *al-tahbīr fī 'ilm al-tafsīr* 'The composition on *tafsīr* studies' by the famous Egyptian scholar al-Suyūṭī (849/1445–911/1505). London, SOAS, Photographic and digital collection MS. 380808, MS.3lml.



It is remarkable how this quote visually springs out of the whole page. Although in a script much smaller than the main Qur'an text, the lines of the passage, which are written in a block immediately after the last verse of the Qur'an, are amply sparse, making it stand out prominently against all other annotations on the page. What is even more important, however, is that the quote had been written prior to any other commentaries – note the way this textual block is surrounded by inscriptions. It means that after having finished the main Qur'an text, the scribe indicated that the volume was intended to be used for further writing (as happened afterwards as we can see). This is a clear evidence of preparation of the Qur'an text for studying Old Kanembu and Arabic *tafsīr*.

## 4.6 Language

The linguistic properties of Old Kanembu glosses vary only slightly across manuscripts from widely different periods. One variety of the language is represented equally in the oldest MS.2ShK and MS.3ImI (16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries), and in 20<sup>th</sup>-century manuscripts. The comparison of grammatical structures of Old Kanembu with the spoken Kanuri used during the last century of the ancient Borno Sultanate (late 15<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) as represented in the gargams and the Gazar dialect of Kanuri (late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century) as recorded by Koelle (1854a, b) shows that major lexical and grammatical differences exist between Old Kanembu and the Kanuri of the Borno Sultanate. This indicates that the language used in the glosses was not contemporaneous with Kanuri as spoken at the time the manuscripts were created (i.e. between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries), but rather reflects a spoken variety of Kanembu, the language of the old Kanem Sultanate (10<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries, see Bondarev 2006b, 2013a, b).

Due, however, to the restricted Old Kanembu corpus and the fact that it represents a highly specialized variety of the language used for Qur'anic interpretation, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what form of the language is represented in the Qur'anic glosses. It is possible that they combine grammatical structures inherited from different chronological stages of Old Kanembu and Borno Kanuri, and as such cannot be placed at a particular period. Rather the language of the glosses is best considered a cluster of archaic features dating from the period of Old Borno back to the Old Kanem period.

The Old Kanembu glosses are written according to rather regular spelling conventions within a single manuscript. This is irrespective of the fact that in each manuscript the glosses were written by a number of different scribes. Orthography nevertheless varies from manuscript to manuscript. For example, the grapheme <th> does not occur in MS.2ShK, as it does in MS.1YM. Instead, the grapheme <s>

is used in the corresponding lexemes: <*siki*> (MS.2ShK) – <*thīgī*> (MS.1YM) ‘there is’, <*sa*> (MS.2ShK) – <*tha*> (MS.1YM) ‘they say’, <*srakō*> (MS.2ShK) – <*thragō*> (MS.1YM) ‘he wants’, <*satalkī*> (MS.2ShK) – <*thutulūgī*> (MS.1YM) ‘he took out’.

It is possible that the spelling systems applied to Old Kanembu by the scribes of MS.1YM and MS.2ShK were influenced by the different Kanuri or Kanembu dialects they spoke in everyday life. This manuscript-specific orthography may indicate that the Borno Qur’ans were created in different places and not only in the capital city Birni Gazargamu. On the other hand, some orthographic conventions are apparently universal, such as the personal pronouns <*hū*> ‘I’, <*nī*> ‘you’, and <*tī*> ‘he/she’, to mention just a few. This further corroborates the hypothesis that Old Kanembu of Borno Qur’ans represents a kind of standard, literate form of the language which transcends dialect.

## 4.7 The continuation of the archaic tradition: Tarjumo

A descendant of Old Kanembu survives in modern-day Borno in the form of a largely unreported language known locally as “Tarjumo” (Tela 1994, Bondarev 2006b, 2013a, b). This language functions synchronically only as a language for Islamic scholars, and it is entirely unintelligible to most speakers of modern Kanuri. Its only use is as a language of vernacular commentary on texts written and read in Arabic. Etymologically, the term *Tarjumo* derives from the Arabic verb *tarjama* (‘to translate, interpret’), and the noun *tarjamat* (‘translation, interpretation’). Its application to the exegetical medium of Qur’anic interpretation is metonymic: the language is named according to the concept or function associated with it.

Preliminary analysis of Tarjumo shows that its linguistic structure is much closer to Old Kanembu than to modern Kanuri (Bondarev 2006b, 2013a, b). This is illustrated by the following example:

Qur’anic Arabic (Qur’an 79,11):

’*a’idhā kunnā ’izāma nakhira*  
when we.were bones decayed

‘after we were decayed bones’ (interpreted in *tafsīr*: ‘after we have returned to decayed bones’)

Old Kanembu (MS.1YM):

<tsatadiki-ya            shila    dint-bū-ro            tadiki-ya>  
 us.were.made-when   bone   aging-PRTCP-IO   it.was.made-when<sup>25</sup>  
 ‘after we were old bones’ (lit. ‘after we were made old bones’)

Tarjumo:

*andiye*   tadi-ye-ya            shilawá    dintā-bū-ro            ||*andiye* tadiyeya ||  
 we.SJ   were-we-when   bones   aging-PRTCP-IO  
 ‘after we were old bones’  
 (Double vertical lines (||) indicate a repeated passage).

Modern Kanuri (Luwuran Kambo 2003, 7):

*ngáwo*   *shila*        *mbəs-káta-ro*                            *wálnyéna-dā-n*  
 after   bones   decay-PAST.PRTCPL-IO   we.return-the-at  
 ‘after we have returned to decaying bones’

As evident from the above, Tarjumo shows a close grammatical and lexical relation to Old Kanembu, while Modern Kanuri differs remarkably from both Old Kanembu and Tarjumo. The items cognate in Old Kanembu and Tarjumo (but not present in modern Kanuri) are underlined. Old Kanembu grammatical structures are not always preserved in Tarjumo, many of them being reanalysed in accordance with modern Kanuri grammar. For example, the word-forms <*tsatadiki*> ‘we were made’ and <*tadiki*> ‘was made’, which are passive forms of the verb <*tsigi*> ‘to be’ in Old Kanembu, were reinterpreted in Tarjumo as active forms of a non-existent Old Kanembu verb \**tadi* with the same meaning ‘to be’.

Tarjumo mainly functions in the oral domain as a medium for interpreting written Arabic texts like the Qur’an (with the mandatory use of an Arabic *tafsir*, mainly *Tafsir al-Jalālayn* by al-Suyūṭī and al-Maḥallī), *qasida*’s (versified compositions) written by local sheikhs in Arabic, or invocations (used as healing and purifying techniques) based on *Kitāb al-shifā*’ of Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ.

Like the Old Kanembu of the Old Borno manuscripts, Tarjumo also exists in written form for educational purposes and for translation of various religious texts in Arabic, such as *Umm al-barāhīn* (*al-‘aqīda al-ṣuḡhrā* by al-Sanūsī) and the *Tawḥīd* (doctrine of the oneness of God) section of *al-Murshid al-Mu‘īn* (‘The helpful guide’) by Ibn ‘Āshūr (Figure 10).

25 Abbreviations: IO – indirect object, PRTCP – participle, SJ – subject marker.



Fig. 10: The *Tawhīd* section of *al-Murshid al-Mu'in* (The Helpful Guide), Maiduguri, Imam Habib collection, MS.Tawhid/1.

In Qur'anic education, Tarjumo is introduced as a special subject when students of the traditional advanced Qur'anic schools start studying the *tafsīr*. The teaching method is based on integrated oral and written transmission. Starting from the last *sura*'s the *malam* ('teacher') reads short passages of the Qur'an, broken down into smaller phrases, each accompanied by a short phrase in Tarjumo. The

student writes the pronounced passage down and repeats it until it is learned by heart. In former times, the text would have been written on a wooden slate (*allo* < Ar. *lawḥ*) until the student was allowed to write on paper in a manuscript. In our time, the text is written in a notebook with non-standardized rules for spelling the Tarjumo words – a practice different from the orthographic tradition used in the past as represented by Borno Qur’ans.

## 5 Conclusions

The political and religious history of Kanem-Borno is attested in two traditions of written literature: the monolingual manuscripts of the Borno Sultanate written in Kanuri, and the bilingual manuscripts in Arabic and Old Kanembu.

As shown in Table 1, the two manuscript traditions are distinguished by five parameters. The only shared features are script type and, to an extent, page layout.

**Tab. 1:** Comparative characteristics of gargams and bilingual Borno manuscripts

| Parameter                | Gargams                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Bilingual Borno manuscripts                                                                                        |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Language              | Monolingual: Kanuri of the Borno period (ca. 18–19th cc.)                                                                                                                                                            | Bilingual: (Qur’anic) Arabic and Old Kanembu                                                                       |
| 2. Content               | Historical information: genealogies.                                                                                                                                                                                 | Non-historical information: commentaries on the Qur’an                                                             |
| 3. Function              | Secular: mnemonic texts based on genealogical recitation at the court of the ruler.                                                                                                                                  | Religious: annotations used in Qur’anic education for advanced students in Old Kanembu/Tarjumo and <i>tafsīr</i> . |
| 4. Historical continuity | Discontinued (with the fall of the Syfuwa dynasty in 1846.)                                                                                                                                                          | Continuing (in oral and written form in form of commentary on the Qur’an and other religious texts in Arabic).     |
| 5. Period of production  | 18 <sup>th</sup> to 19 <sup>th</sup> centuries                                                                                                                                                                       | 16 <sup>th</sup> –17 <sup>th</sup> to 21 <sup>th</sup> centuries                                                   |
| 6. Script                | Borno type of Arabic script related to <i>Maghribī</i> variety                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                    |
| 7. Layout                | Gargams copy some of the arrangement of the Borno Qur’an mss, i.e., wide margins and use of a ruling frame. But gargams have no punctuation, nor do they use the system of text division found in the Borno Qur’ans. |                                                                                                                    |

The monolingual gargams reflect the history of the former Kanem-Borno ruling dynasty, while the bilingual Borno manuscripts reflect the development of Islam and Qur'anic studies in Kanem-Borno. These two "histories" are not easy to separate because of close connection of Qur'anic learning with the royal Sayfawa court.

As mentioned in section 2, the ruling dynasty adopted Islam and engaged itself directly with Qur'anic education from the early Kanem period. According to the Arab historian al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century a Kanem *mai* – most probably Dunama Dabalemi who ruled in 606–646/1210–1248 – built the madrasa called Ibn Rashīq in Cairo for students from Kanem (Lange 1977, 72, Levtzion and Hopkins 1981, 353).

If we also recall the mentioned custom, practiced by the Sayfawa dynasty, of granting Muslim scholars charters of privilege (section 2), it will be clear that close association between the court and the Muslim scholarly community had been a rule for all *mai*'s. The *maḥram*'s as written documents confirmed the granting of *ḥurma* (inviolability) to an '*ālim* 'a scholar' in return for his promise to pray for the *mai* and provide him *baraka* (blessing). The *maḥram* system maintained support of '*ulamā*' by the rulers, because the rulers sought blessing and feared their curse (Bobboy 1992, 125–126), but the system also encouraged and sustained Islamic learning, since "the inviolability of the mallamtis [i.e., state protected scholarly villages] ... attracted a large number of students and provided a stable basis for the conduct of educational activities during the Sayfawa period..." (ibid, 127 ).

The component of the ruling power is imbedded in the history of Islamic education in Borno, especially in *tafsīr* studies. The Kanuri oral tradition ascribes the foundation of advanced *tafsīr* studies in early Borno to *mai* 'Alī Gaji b. Dunama (Mustapha 1987) whose reign (869–902/1465–1497 [Lange 1977, 91]) is also associated with the establishment of the Borno capital Gazargamu in 1480. On his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1484, he received the title of caliph of Borno from the 'Abbasid caliph in Cairo with the assistance of the famous Muslim scholar and Qur'an commentator Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (849/1445–911/1505) (Levtzion 2000, 81). Al-Suyūṭī's commentary on the Qur'an (co-authored with his teacher Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī) has till now been the most widely read and best known exegetical work in Borno and West Africa in general, and has also been used as a primary study companion in learning Old Kanembu in its Tarjumo form. As we have seen in section 4.5, the organisation of wide-margin layout for the Borno Qur'ans alludes to other famous al-Suyūṭī's work. Thus, the name of the renowned Egyptian exegete and the Borno ruler who established the Old Borno capital and is portrayed as the propagator of advanced Islamic learning are tightly linked in local historical memory concerning Old Kanembu/Tarjumo and *tafsīr* studies.



The manuscripts examined in the present article – the gargams of the *mai*'s of Kanem-Borno and the Qur'ans of Tarjumo and *tafsīr* education – all originated in this particular political, religious and educational symbiosis. It is this that may account for their similarities of layout: the scribes who wrote the gargams could have modelled their wide-margin texts on the Qur'an manuscripts, so that visually the former referred to the latter. This way, in a very concise form as the gargams were, the scribes would secure the delivery of a multilayered message that could simultaneously hint at the long succession of the rulers, their political and religious power and not the least at tight bonds between Muslim scholars and the Sayfawa dynasty seen as propagators and protectors of Islamic education.

Considering their close historical connection to the early Borno Qur'ans produced in the 11<sup>th</sup> AH/17<sup>th</sup> CE century or earlier, it should not be ruled out that the gargams came into written existence much earlier than is evident from Palmer's dating (i.e. 1209/1794, cf. Palmer 1936, 107). This assumption is, however, unlikely to be proved until original copies of gargams are found.

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Dominik Wujastyk

# Indian Manuscripts

## 1 Introduction

India as a modern nation-state covers the greater part of the South Asian peninsula, from the Himalayas in the north to the tip of Cape Comorin, about 3000 km to the south. However, as a cultural-historical sphere, other modern states such as Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and even to some extent Burma, Thailand and Indonesia, share aspects of their manuscript heritage with modern India. Countries such as Afghanistan and even western China, especially Xinjiang Province, have been important sites of “Indian” manuscript discovery, and the Tibetan manuscript tradition was strongly influenced by Indian Buddhist models. This is because these surrounding geographical areas participated in trade and cultural exchange with South Asia from a very early period, and especially because of the missionary activities of Buddhist monks. What, then, really defines an “Indian manuscript”?

For most specialists, this expression conjures up the idea of a hand-written document inscribed on paper or palm leaf, in Devanāgarī or one of the other alphabets of South or Central Asia, and typically in the Sanskrit, Tamil or Persian language. But one has to bear in mind that the boundaries of definition are fluid, and that a manuscript from China, written on birch-bark in the Kharoṣṭhī script of Gandhāra and the Middle-Iranian language called Khotanese, may also be considered, in many respects, an Indian manuscript, for example if it contains a translation of a Sanskrit treatise on Buddhism or ayurveda, or if it was produced in a Buddhist monastery that still had living links with India.

It is also important to remember that Islamic culture began to influence India over a thousand years ago, and has left a huge legacy of manuscripts and paintings, especially from the courtly centres of the Sultans and Mughals. Islamic Indian manuscripts are often written in the (Middle) Persian language and script, but there are also many surviving manuscripts in Arabic and Urdu, written in variant forms of the Perso-Arabic alphabet. The present chapter will focus mainly on Sanskrit and Prakrit manuscripts, which form by far the greatest bulk of surviving manuscript materials in South Asia, and which represent the continuous cultural heritage of India dating back to the second millennium BCE.

How many Indian manuscripts are there? The National Mission for Manuscripts in New Delhi works with a conservative figure of seven million manu-

scripts, and its database is approaching two million records.<sup>1</sup> The late Prof. David Pingree, basing his count on a lifetime of academic engagement with Indian manuscripts, estimated that there were thirty million manuscripts, if one counted both those in public and government libraries, and those in private collections.<sup>2</sup> For anyone coming to Indian studies from another field, these gargantuan figures are scarcely credible. But after some acquaintance with the subject, and visits to manuscript libraries in India, it becomes clear that these very large figures are wholly justified. The Jaina manuscript library at Koba in Gujarat, which only started publishing its catalogues in 2003, has an estimated 250,000 manuscripts. The Sarasvati Bhavan Library in Benares has in excess of 100,000 manuscripts. There are 85,000 in various repositories in Delhi. There are about 50,000 manuscripts in the Sarasvati Mahal library in Thanjavur in the far South. Such examples are easily multiplied across the whole subcontinent. And these are only the public libraries with published catalogues. A one-year pilot field-survey by the National Mission for Manuscripts in Delhi, during 2004–2005, documented 650,000 manuscripts distributed across 35,000 repositories in the states of Orissa, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and field participants in that project report that they only scratched the surface.<sup>3</sup> The former maharajas often collected huge private manuscript libraries, only some of which are publicly available today. And it is very common for a modest Brahman family today, living away from urban centres, to have a cupboard containing two or three thousand manuscripts, handed down from a learned grandfather, perhaps. A reader unfamiliar with the Indian case, and thinking such numbers inconceivable, might assume that these are fragments or single leaves, a kind of trans-continental Geniza. That is not the case. These millions of Indian manuscripts are mostly full literary works, typically consisting of scores or hundreds of closely-written folios, most often in Sanskrit, and containing works of classical learning on logic, theology, philosophy, medicine, grammar, law, mathematics, yoga, tantra, alchemy, religion, poetry, drama, epic, and a host of other themes. Throughout history, Indian society has vigorously privileged higher learning, and the record of over two and a half millennia of artistic and intellectual work has been transmitted in manuscript form to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

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1 <<http://www.namami.org/manuscriptdatabase.htm>>, consulted 18 August 2011.

2 David Pingree, personal communication in the 1990s.

3 <<http://www.namami.org/nationalsurvey.htm>>, consulted August 2011. Field-survey remark from personal communication at NAMAMI (National Mission for Manuscripts), September 2011.

4 Filliozat 2000 insightfully describes the intellectual and social world of traditional Indian learning. See also Pollock 2007, Wujastyk 2007 and Minkowski 2010 on the cultural history of early Sanskrit manuscript libraries.

In spite of the great time-depth of Indian culture, and the large numbers of surviving manuscripts, the graph of surviving manuscript numbers against time peaks in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are numerically more Indian manuscripts surviving from the 1820s and 1830s than from any other period of history. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the smaller numbers before the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be explained by the environmental conditions in most of South Asia, that are hostile to birch bark, paper and palm leaf. The monsoon climate, and the work of insects, mould, and rodents, have destroyed millions of early manuscripts. This is why some of the very oldest manuscripts in Sanskrit have been discovered not in India, but in the dry, desert conditions of Central Asia, in caves, *stūpas* or buried libraries on the Silk Route.<sup>5</sup> These truly ancient manuscripts are of immense historical importance, especially for the study of Buddhism. But numerically they are a tiny fraction of the surviving legacy. Another reason for the 19<sup>th</sup>-century peak is the demise of the traditional profession of manuscript scribe, in the face of the rise of printing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. First lithography, and later moveable-type technologies were applied to the reproduction of Sanskrit works on a large scale, especially by publishers in Bombay and Calcutta. Some scribes were employed to write lithographic prints, but many migrated into secretarial and administrative posts within the government, a migration that had already begun in Mughal times.<sup>6</sup>

An Indian manuscript written on hand-made Indian paper has a typical physical lifetime of two to three centuries, after which it becomes increasingly fragile and illegible, and a new copy must be created.<sup>7</sup> Of course, much depends on handling and use. If carefully preserved, and perhaps revered rather than read, paper manuscripts may survive longer, but paper manuscripts in South Asia are rare from before 1500. Palm leaf manuscripts are more robust, and can last a millennium or more if treated well. For example, the Wellcome *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* ("The Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 verses") is datable to about 1075 CE, and is still in almost pristine condition.<sup>8</sup> Palm leaf manuscripts tend to wear around the edges. Scribes knew this and often left large margins, so even after hundreds of years, the text area of the manuscript remained intact. But when material costs obliged them to write close to the edges

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5 Salomon 2003 describes such a collection acquired by the British Library in 1994, and other recent finds, mostly dating from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

6 See O'Hanlon / Minkowski 2008 for an exploration of the social history of this change.

7 Losty 1982 makes important remarks about the earliest history of paper manufacture in Nepal, that predated the importation of paper technology from China.

8 Wellcome MS Indic epsilon 1, at the Wellcome Library, London (Wujastyk 1985, 1998); Allinger 2012).

of the palm leaf, then splitting and erosion of the leaf could lead to loss of text. Thus, the Wellcome copy of the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā* (“The Tantra of Sighs”), written on paper in Nepal in 1912, preserves letters from the edges of the 9<sup>th</sup>-century palm leaf exemplar in Kathmandu that have been broken and lost since 1912, thus giving the London apograph independent text-historical value.<sup>9</sup> Birch bark was the most fragile writing support used widely in early India, being associated especially with Kashmir. Surviving birch bark manuscripts flake and split when handled, and present almost insurmountable problems for the conservator, with encapsulation often being the only recourse.

While it may seem strange that our knowledge of ancient literature should depend on recent manuscripts, this is often the case also for Greek and Latin learning. For example, the oldest complete manuscript copy of Euclid’s *Elements*, composed in ca. 300 BCE, is dated 888 CE. The *Elements*, perhaps the most important mathematical work ever written, was transmitted through copy after copy for over a thousand years before we have any physical evidence for the complete text. In a similar way, Indian literature was carefully copied and recopied for centuries, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The great social and technological changes that have taken place since then have meant the end of manuscript copying in India on a grand scale. Instead, the future survival of this Indian literary and intellectual heritage today depends on the discovery, conservation, preservation and reproduction by digital means of the last generation of Indian manuscripts.

A back-of-an-envelope calculation based on estimated figures and attrition rates suggest that several hundred Sanskrit manuscripts are being destroyed or becoming illegible every week. It is inevitable that some of these losses will include unique, unknown, or otherwise important works. Scholars professionally involved in Indian manuscript studies are universally afflicted with anxiety about this critical state of affairs. Only the Indian government has the resources and authority to make serious headway in preserving the Indian manuscript heritage, and the establishment of the National Mission for Manuscripts in 2003 was a ray of hope.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Wellcome MS Indic delta 41 (Wujastyk 1985, 1998, v.1, 151–2). Personal communication from Prof. André Padoux; cf. Sanderson 2001, 5, note 7. The 9<sup>th</sup>-century exemplar is MS NAK 1–277 in the National Archives of Nepal, Kathmandu.

<sup>10</sup> <<http://www.namami.org>>, viewed August 2011.

## 2 Writing

The oldest physical writing in India survives as rock inscriptions. The most famous and earliest inscriptions, or epigraphs, are those of King Aśoka (crowned ca. 264 BCE), who wrote edicts to his subjects in a personal and confessional style that communicates strongly across the millennia.<sup>11</sup> Although writing was probably known to exist outside India before Aśoka, it has been compellingly argued that Aśoka created the first alphabetical writing specific to South Asia, in order to promulgate his edicts.<sup>12</sup> He was influenced by Greek and Kharoṣṭhī models, but created an entirely new script for the language of his edicts, which was Prakrit, a common speech closely related to Sanskrit.<sup>13</sup> This script was later called Brāhmī, and was the ancestor of most later writing systems in India, with the exception of the Perso-Arabic family.

We do not know exactly when manuscripts began to be written in India. The oral tradition of recitation and memorisation was extraordinarily strong in early Indian culture, and has continued into modern times. It is still possible to meet *paṇḍitas* (Brahman scholars) who know seemingly impossible volumes of scholarly Sanskrit literature by heart, and memorisation has always been thought of as essential to true learning in India. Yet, in spite of the strong privileging of memorisation through all periods of Indian history, it is clear that manuscripts were written and copied in increasingly large numbers, probably from the last few centuries BCE.

The earliest scripts are the Kharoṣṭhī and Brāhmī syllabaries. The former was normally written from right-to-left, and the script appears to be an Indian development from Aramaic models. It was used for the earliest surviving Indian manuscripts, the Buddhist scrolls now at the British Library. However, Kharoṣṭhī gradually died out, and the last use of the script was in writings from remote towns on the Silk Route in about the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. Brāhmī is first known to us from the Aśokan inscriptions, and was continuously adapted and modified over two millennia, forming the basis of all the alphabets of Indian origin in South Asia today. Script divergence began early, and variants of Brāhmī that may have been mutually illegible were already in existence by at least the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, by which time various lists of scripts, some of up to sixty-four names, had appeared in Buddhist and Jaina sources.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Thapar 1997 is a standard introduction to Aśokan studies.

<sup>12</sup> Falk 1993.

<sup>13</sup> On the early history of writing in India, see also Salomon 1995 and Salomon 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Salomon 1998, 8–9.

Early Indian scripts and their derivatives all assume that a single character or “letter” is a consonant with a vowel. The unmarked vowel is “a.” Other vowels are written as diacritical marks. These scripts are, therefore, syllabaries rather than alphabets. In this respect, the conception of the script’s minimal units as syllables is in tune with the sophisticated early literature on phonetics from the vedic tradition, in which it was understood that a consonant cannot, in fact, be pronounced without a vowel.<sup>15</sup>

The scripts derived from Brāhmī have approximately fifty syllables that are conventionally ordered in accordance with a grid of phonetic realities, i.e., voiceless consonants before voiced, unaspirated before aspirated, in the sequence of consonantal stop position from back-to-front of the mouth cavity: velar, palatal, retroflex, dental, labial.<sup>16</sup> No distinction of upper- or lower-case is observed, and syllables are pronounced the same in all contexts, making correct reading aloud relatively easy once the glyphs are learned. There are two principal challenges in beginning reading and comprehension. First, two or more consonants without an intervening vowel combine graphically into a new conjunct form that is not always visually related to the original consonants. These combinations raise the number of commonly-used glyphs to above 350. Secondly, scribes do not routinely mark all word-breaks with spaces. To read out loud with comprehension, one needs to know the lexicon without the help of visual cues. For this reason, some manuscripts have small vertical tick-marks above the lines, marking word-division.

The earliest scripts known from manuscript writing are related, as one would expect, to the earlier surviving specimens of epigraphical script. By about 700 CE, the Gupta script known from north Indian inscriptions evolved into a script called Siddhamāṭṛkā, which continued to be in use until about 1200. While the Gupta script is almost unknown in manuscripts,<sup>17</sup> Siddhamāṭṛkā is found in early palm leaf manuscripts from Nepal and Bengal. It is a beautiful, angular calligraphic script. Apart from its inherent beauty, it is important as the ancestor of Devanāgarī, the script used for the bulk of north Indian manuscripts from the last thousand years, and also the script used for the modern Hindi and Marathi languages. Siddhamāṭṛkā is also the ancestor of the Tibetan script, while in north-

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<sup>15</sup> Allen 1953, 14 for a discussion of vowel “potestas” amongst the Sanskrit phoneticians (the actual sound of a phonic blast, as opposed to the name, “nomen,” or glyph, “figura,” of a phonic unit).

<sup>16</sup> Gandhāran *arapacana* syllabary, found in Buddhist documents in the Kharoṣṭhī script, is not arranged on phonetic principles. See Salomon 1990.

<sup>17</sup> Several early Nepalese manuscripts were said to be in Gupta writing by Śāstri 1905, 1915, but his nomenclature is uncertain.



east India, it evolved into the modern scripts of that region, Bengālī, Assamese, Oriya and Maithilī.

In north-west India, the Śāradā script of Kashmir, itself emerging from the Gupta script, evolved in to Lahndā of the western Panjab region by the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and then by the 16<sup>th</sup> century into the Gurmukhī script mostly associated with the Sikh communities of the Panjab.

In South India, yet different ramifications of Brāhmī developed, marked by increasingly cursive and circular strokes that contrasted with the angularity of the northern scripts. This family is today represented by the Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, and Sinhala scripts. A special adaptation of the Tamil script for writing Sanskrit is known as the Grantha script.

As can readily be seen from this thumbnail sketch, the story of script in India is complex. Scribes would normally be versed in their local script, and so Sanskrit was normally written down in that script too. Therefore, manuscripts of the same Sanskrit work are often to be found written in three, four, or more quite different scripts, according to their locations. The localness of writing traditions also influenced textual transmission. Many texts have recensions that are defined by the script-groups in which the manuscripts have been transmitted. For example, the famous play *Śakuntalā*, by India's greatest pre-modern playwright, Kālidāsa (fl. ca. 14<sup>th</sup> century), is known in different recensions according to the Śāradā, Devanāgarī or Bengālī script-groupings of the surviving manuscripts, the last group having extra prose and verse passages that emphasise the erotic content of the drama.<sup>18</sup> Manuscripts in the Śāradā script, normally from Kashmir, where Brahman *paṇḍitas* were famously learned and conservative, often preserve early textual recensions, and are important for textual reconstruction.

The student of Indian manuscripts must ideally be able to read several of the most important scripts, which would include Devanāgarī, Śāradā, Malayāḷam and Bengālī, and be prepared to learn new scripts as necessary.

Manuscripts written by Jaina or Buddhist scribes often display beautiful calligraphy, decoration and sometimes illustration. Other scribes most often wrote in a workmanlike but unadorned fashion. The vast majority of Indian manuscripts are not works of art, for all that they may contain beautiful and important literary texts.

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<sup>18</sup> Johnson 2001, xxx–xxxi.

### 3 Material support

While wood, cloth, copper and other writing supports were sometimes used, the principle writing supports in India have been birch bark, palm leaf and paper. Papyrus and parchment were unknown, the latter due to the widely-shared Brahman religious concepts of vegetarianism and harmlessness to living creatures (Skt. *ahimsā*).

Broadly speaking, in the north and west of the subcontinent, early manuscripts were written on scrolls made of the bark of the birchtree, flattened, glued into sheets and cut into scrolls or sheets. Kashmir was a noted source of the manufacture of this material, which was also exported to Central Asia and south to the Panjab. Birch bark was still being used for manuscript production as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Writing on the smooth, flat surface of birch bark was done with ink and a stylus, and the horizontal and vertical strokes could be emphasised calligraphically. This technique carried over to palm leaf and later to paper, after its widespread introduction in the early second millennium CE. The most common script used on birch bark manuscripts is Śāradā.

The leaves of two species of palm were used as writing supports in India, *Corypha umbraculifera*, the Talipot Palm native to southern India and Sri Lanka, and *Borassus flabellifer*, the Toddy Palm, native to South and South East Asia.<sup>19</sup> Leaves were selected for size and quality, and then boiled in water and dried, sometimes in warm sand. The surfaces of the leaves were then polished with pumice, and cut to regular, long, narrow sizes. A hole was sometimes punched in the centre of the leaf so that a stack could be strung together to keep them in order. Some older, wider palm leaf manuscripts from Bengal and Nepal were written using ink and a calligraphic stylus, as with birch bark. But the most common scribal practice, especially on the east of India from Bengal to Tamil Nadu in the south, was to inscribe the text on the leaf using a pointed stylus. The manuscript would be delivered to its owner in this form. In order to read the text, it would have to be wiped with a cloth soaked in oil and lampblack, that would fill the incised letters with dark colour and render the manuscript legible.

Paper-making was invented in China at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, although there are some earlier precursors. Slowly, knowledge of paper-making spread over a period of centuries along the Silk Route through Samarkand and to Baghdad, reaching Muslim Spain and Sicily by the 10<sup>th</sup> century. It is unclear whether knowledge of paper-making reached India from China through Central Asia, Tibet and Nepal, or through Islamic traders in the Indian Ocean, and later

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<sup>19</sup> Katre 1941, 6.

the Muslim invaders who entered India from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards. It is notable that several of the later centres of paper-making are Islamic-founded cities such as Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Faizabad and Aurangabad. Perhaps the knowledge arrived from more than one source. Paper began to supplant palm leaf as the most abundant writing support from about the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with some of the earliest paper manuscripts being found in Jaina libraries in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

## 4 Manuscript libraries

From at least the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, mendicant groups including Buddhists, Jains and Ājīvikas, whose vows included a peripatetic lifestyle, were permitted to stay in one place for the three months of the rainy season.<sup>20</sup> These monsoon sojourns evolved over the centuries into monastic institutions that included educational functions. New monastic centres of learning that became particularly famous included Nālandā (Bihar, from ca. 4<sup>th</sup> century–1200), Valabhi, Jagaddala (Bengal, ca. 1100–1200), Odantapuri (Bihar, from ca. 700), and Somapura (Rajshahi, Bangladesh, ca. 8<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>21</sup> Many of these institutions developed libraries. From the detailed descriptive accounts of the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (602–664), it has been estimated that there were at least 212,130 ordained monks involved in scholarship and education in the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The figures for Jaina monks and institutions of the period are not so well known, but the Jainas too developed a large network of temple libraries for the use of peripatetic monks, and groups of Jaina monks were also present at monasteries like Nalanda that are usually thought of as Buddhist.<sup>22</sup> Many of the Buddhist monastic libraries were destroyed by the Islamic incursions of Muhammad Bakhtīār Khiljī (d. 1205), and others, and medieval Buddhist manuscripts from India are very rare. Jaina libraries seem to have fared slightly better, although the many libraries established by the 12<sup>th</sup>-century kings Kumārapāla and Vastupāla in Pāṭaṇ are thought to have been destroyed during the Muslim conquests. Yet there are many great Jaina library collections that have survived to the present day.<sup>23</sup> These include the Koba Tirth collection mentioned above, as well as the L. D. Institute in Ahmedabad, the Jñāna Bhaṇḍāra in Jaisalmer, the Hemacandra Jñāna Bhaṇḍāra in Pāṭaṇ and many others.<sup>24</sup> Libraries were often kept in semi-secret chambers or cellars, with

<sup>20</sup> Scharfe 2002, ch. 9: “From monasteries to universities.”

<sup>21</sup> Altekar 1944, ch. 5, Mookerji 1947, *passim*, Bose 1923.

<sup>22</sup> Cort 1995, 33–44.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson 1999.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. See also Kasliwal 1967.

access strictly limited to monks. The broad cultural and philosophical interests of Jaina scholars over the ages have meant that Jaina scribes also copied non-Jaina works in relative abundance. Jaina manuscript libraries today are of great importance both for the history of Jainism itself, but also for all aspects of early Indian cultural and literary history.

Today, there are hundreds of major Indian manuscript libraries in India, and scores abroad, especially in Europe and the USA. Some are the result of government collection policies, others are royal libraries created by former maharajas. Yet others are parts of religious endowments, schools, temples, and monasteries. Finally, there are many private collections.<sup>25</sup>

## 5 Access

Many manuscript libraries and librarians in India and abroad understand scholarship and are extremely helpful to the visiting scholar seeking access to a manuscript for research. The Koba Tirth manuscript library, perhaps the largest single manuscript collection in the world, has exemplary policies towards the promotion of scholarship, and advanced technical and administrative infrastructures. But there are exceptions, too. Negotiating access to manuscript collections can be tortuous and bureaucratic, and sometimes even the most strenuous efforts fail. Some libraries are just inaccessible, locked with several padlocks whose key-holders are scattered over a whole state (for example, the Jñāna Bhaṇḍāra in Jaisalmere). Others are locked pending the resolution to family disputes that have lasted decades (the Anup Library in Bikaner). Others are located in institutions that have little interest in Sanskrit scholarship (the Woolner Collection in Lahore), are paralysed by internal politics (the Sarasvati Bhavan, Varanasi), or charge prohibitive fees for non-Indian scholars (Baroda Oriental Institute). Cases could be multiplied. In moments of frustration, Kosambi's Law of Manuscripts can be a comfort: "It is a general rule (Kosambi's law!) that the actual use-value of a manuscript is inversely proportional to the fuss made in lending it".<sup>26</sup> Reserves of patience, good will and time are the greatest assets in accessing Indian manuscripts located in traditional settings.

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<sup>25</sup> Minkowski 2010 provides a valuable survey of libraries, with a focus on the early modern period.

<sup>26</sup> Kosambi 2000 (=1948), 10. D. D. Kosambi was a mathematician, historian, text-editor and manuscript hunter.

## 6 Catalogues and finding aids

In textual criticism, it has been said, “the hardest part to carry out with complete success is probably the business of finding out what manuscripts there are”.<sup>27</sup> How does one find out what manuscripts there are in the Indian case?

In 1868, the government of India instituted a program of manuscript cataloguing and collection.<sup>28</sup> India was at that time administered in three large “presidencies.” In the Bombay and Madras Presidencies, the funds sanctioned by the 1868 decision were spent on a series of regional searches by Sanskrit scholars including such renowned figures as Franz Kielhorn (1840–1908), Georg Bühler (1837–1898), Peter Peterson (1847–1899) and Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar (1837–1925), who published reports on their findings, catalogued local collections, acquired manuscripts where available, and commissioned copies of others. These materials were routed to Poona and Madras respectively, where Government Oriental Manuscript Libraries (GOML) were established.<sup>29</sup> These two libraries still exist, and contain extraordinarily rich collections. Both GOML have issued scores of volumes of descriptive catalogues of their collections. These collections continue to grow, mainly by private donation.

In the Bengal Presidency, things were handled differently. Rajendralal Mitra (1823–1891) and Haraprasad Shastri (1853–1931), two Sanskrit scholars of immense learning, conducted searches for manuscripts throughout Bengal, visiting many small private collections. Their manuscript descriptions often included analyses of the subject content of the manuscripts, and the resulting series of volumes entitled *Notices of Sanskrit Manuscripts* offer rich, detailed materials for the history of literature, often offering the first modern descriptions of previously unknown works. However, the actual manuscripts were left in situ, and no attempt was made to create a centralized manuscript library in Calcutta. This function was to some extent fulfilled by the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, founded in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and housing one of the great manuscript libraries of the subcontinent. This library too has issued many descriptive catalogues, including volumes by Haraprasad Shastri, and continues to be actively managed today.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Indian manuscript collections began to be identified, studied and catalogued in all parts of India, often by European scholars who lived and worked in India most of their lives. At the same time, some personal Indian manuscript collections began to find their way to European libraries, as gifts or

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<sup>27</sup> West 1973, 64.

<sup>28</sup> The government correspondence and background to this policy were collected and published in Gough 1878.

<sup>29</sup> Johnson 1980.

sales by Europeans returning from India. The first major Indian manuscript catalogues in Europe were those of Theodor Aufrecht (1822–1907) at the Bodleian and Albrecht Weber (1825–1901) in Berlin.<sup>30</sup> Both these early catalogues provided copious extracts from the manuscripts, and presented the entries in a classified subject arrangement. It is no coincidence that both Weber and Aufrecht went on to write histories of Sanskrit literature. These were the beginnings of what would later be called “bibliographical control” of the field of Indian literature. Another important catalogue of the period was that of Arthur Coke Burnell, written in Thanjavur in South India, and published in London.<sup>31</sup> Burnell’s catalogue was the first to present the holdings of a royal library. It called itself a “Classified Index.” While Aufrecht and Weber were taking a corpus approach, and cataloguing bounded, selected collections, with few duplicate works, in depth, Burnell was solving a different problem, which was to become ever more acute up to the present day, namely to offer bibliographical control over very large numbers of manuscripts that included multiple copies of several works. His pioneering work in this respect was exemplary, and in some ways prefigures the highly condensed style of the *Census of Exact Sciences in Sanskrit* by David Pingree (1933–2005), that had similar aims.<sup>32</sup>

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of published catalogues of Indian manuscripts had already grown large enough to demand a general index. Aufrecht published such a bibliographical tool in three volumes between 1891 and 1903.<sup>33</sup> While it indexed the existing catalogues, its title declared a larger goal, to be “an alphabetical register of works and authors.” Aufrecht’s *Catalogus Catalogorum* is perhaps the most important finding aid ever published for Indian literature. Over a century later, scholars working on Indian manuscripts still refer to it frequently, and Aufrecht’s judgements on authorship and the identity of works are rarely faulted.

However, half a century later, the *Catalogus Catalogorum* was no longer remotely adequate as a guide to the growing numbers published catalogues. Amongst the most important new items to just miss Aufrecht’s *Catalogus Catalogorum* were descriptions by Haraprasad Shastri of extremely rare and ancient Indian manuscripts that he discovered in the Durbar Library in Kathmandu,<sup>34</sup> and many other volumes and series of catalogues continued to appear. In 1949, Venkataraman Raghavan (1908–1979), one of the leading Sanskrit scholars of

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<sup>30</sup> Weber 1853–1891, Aufrecht 1859.

<sup>31</sup> Burnell 1880.

<sup>32</sup> Pingree 1970–1994.

<sup>33</sup> Aufrecht 1891–1903.

<sup>34</sup> Śāstri 1905, 1915.



his day, published the first volume of a *New Catalogus Catalogorum* (NCC).<sup>35</sup> This aimed to update Aufrecht's work, but also to add works in the Prakrit languages (vernaculars closely related to Sanskrit). The NCC project, still located at the University of Madras, has attracted the expert work of several generations of selfless workers. It has suffered many vicissitudes, and almost collapsed after volume 13 was published in 1991. One more volume appeared in 2000. However, its present director, Siniruddha Dash, has been successful in raising funds, galvanising the project staff, and introducing computing technology. With volume 15, published in 2007, the project regained its dynamism, and the NCC has now reached volume 19, that ends with titles beginning with "suhodita". The project is nearing completion.

For the titles that it covers, the NCC is the principle finding aid for Indian manuscripts, and the starting point for any serious editorial or literary-historical research in pre-modern Indian literature. For works beginning with syllables after that point, one has to resort to Aufrecht's original *Catalogus Catalogorum* coupled with a laborious search through scores of catalogues and correspondence with the helpful NCC office in Madras.

Unfortunately, even the NCC is no longer comprehensive. Raghavan froze the list of excerpted catalogues in the late 1960s. A limited number of later catalogues were added in later decades, but by no means all that had been published. Dash has revised this policy, and the NCC is now excerpting from recently-published catalogues. Amongst the greatest troves of new manuscript descriptions now included in NCC are the multiple new volumes of the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute (Jodhpur), the Sarasvati Bhavan Library (Varanasi), the Oriental Research Institute (Mysore), the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library (Madras), the French Institute (Pondicherry), the Brindavan Research Institute (Brindavan) and the Oriental Research Institute and Manuscripts Library (Trivandrum). In spite of these huge additions, the hope for the future must be that the NCC will eventually be transmuted into a public online resource, with facilities for cooperative international collaboration.

The most comprehensive guide to published catalogues of Indian manuscripts presently available is the *Bibliographic Survey of Indian Manuscript Catalogues* by A. K. Biswas and M. K. Prajapati.<sup>36</sup> This covers 1087 catalogues of Indian manuscripts, but being over a decade old, it is already in need of updating. The Biswas and Prajapati *Survey* is modelled on the earlier *Annotated Bibliography of*

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<sup>35</sup> Raghavan et al. 1949–.

<sup>36</sup> Biswas / Prajapati 1998.

*the Catalogues of Indian Manuscripts* by Klaus Janert, that remains valuable for its accuracy, introduction on manuscript cataloguing, and its notes on collections.<sup>37</sup>

## 7 Manuscript description

From the pre-modern period, there survive numerous informal lists of manuscripts. These are commonly nothing more than hastily-scribbled lists of titles, often relating to a particular bundle of manuscripts that may or may not still be identifiable.<sup>38</sup> A more formal and famous manuscript listing is that of the great 17<sup>th</sup>-century *paṇḍit* Kavindrācārya Sarasvatī, who lived during the reign of Emperor Akbar. Kavindrācārya's catalogue has been published, but unfortunately his library was scattered, and the exact relationship between the list of titles and the manuscripts in his library is not fully known.<sup>39</sup> Kavindrācārya (or his librarian) signed his manuscripts with a characteristic flourish, and several are identifiable today in libraries in India and abroad.<sup>40</sup>

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century cataloguers, following the 1868 government initiative, followed individual styles of manuscript description, which varied from raw listings of titles to more detailed catalogues that analysed the works in manuscripts down to the level of chapters of works, and gave thumbnail sketches of their contents.

In the years following Independence, the Indian Government convened a Sanskrit Commission, led by several of the most respected Sanskrit scholars of the day. The Commission took evidence during 1956–57, and published its *Report* in 1958.<sup>41</sup> This was a defining document for Sanskrit in India, addressing many issues that remain topical half a century later. Among other things, the *Report* published the general results of a tour that V. Raghavan had conducted in 1954, identifying Indian manuscript collections in India and abroad.<sup>42</sup> As a result of his engagement with Indian codicology, Raghavan produced a blueprint for manu-

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<sup>37</sup> Janert 1965.

<sup>38</sup> For example, Wellcome Indic MSS alpha 746 and alpha 1099 (Wujastyk 1985, 1998, vol. 2, 143–44).

<sup>39</sup> Kavindrācārya's catalogue was published by Sastry 1921 and has been discussed by Gode 1945. See also Gode 1946 and Gode 1940. Kavindrācārya's life has been the subject of several studies, from Sharma 1935 onwards.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., Wellcome MSS Indic beta 362, beta 509, and gamma 507 (Wujastyk 1985, 1998 vol.1, 84), all manuscripts on logic.

<sup>41</sup> Government of India 1958. Transcribed at <<http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/u/45/Book45.htm>> (consulted August 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Raghavan often prepared rapid handlists of the less well-known collections he visited, and in many cases these handlists remain the only finding aids for those collections even today.

script cataloguing in India.<sup>43</sup> A government scheme was introduced by which any library producing a catalogue that adhered to the Raghavan blueprint would receive funding from central sources for the publication of the resulting catalogue. This scheme has led to the publication of many hundreds of catalogues of Indian manuscripts. In essence, the blueprint provides for entering information into what today would be called a spreadsheet, with columns for manuscript number, title, author, material, extent, and notes.

Predictably, Raghavan's influential scheme had virtues and failings. Amongst its virtues was that it provided a public reference for untrained cataloguers, it encouraged the rapid listing of very large collections, and it was coupled with a funded publication scheme. Its failings are more subtle. First, and most obviously, with roughly a single line across two pages for recording information, the blueprint sanctioned the widespread publication of minimal-level cataloguing. The resulting catalogues would more properly be termed handlists or accession-level cataloguing. Less obvious, however, was the promulgation of the idea that a manuscript equalled a work. In this view, a catalogue was a list of titles, rather than a list of physical objects. This idea has taken strong hold in Indian manuscript cataloguing, and has often been adopted as an unexamined assumption by cataloguers. Cataloguers of the great European libraries have moved decisively towards describing a manuscript as a physical object that is a carrier of written texts that are treated as analytical entries, an approach demonstrated, for example, in the exemplary catalogues of Neil R. Ker and Andrew G. Watson. This means that each leaf of a manuscript is examined in sequence for what it contains, and the contents are described following this physical sequence. The introduction and indexes of the catalogue are where a unified view of the literary contents of the individual manuscripts, and the collection as a whole, are presented.

By contrast, catalogues of Indian manuscripts normally present lists of works as if they were lists of manuscripts, silently asserting a false identity between work and manuscript. This leads to the elision of written materials that are not classical works as such, for example scribal comments, marginal glosses, ownership notes, multiple works, minor works attached to famous works, and so forth. To give one example, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, "The Song of the Lord," the most famous religious text of India, is routinely identified as such in manuscript catalogues. However, almost no manuscript actually contains the *Bhagavad Gītā* alone. The work is commonly preceded by a smaller introductory work called the *Bhagavad Gītā Mālā*, "The Garland of the Song of the Lord." What this text is, how if func-

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43 Raghavan 1963.

tions in relation to the main work, what it meant for pre-modern religious prayer and religious practice, and other text-historical questions cannot be asked if no catalogue recognises its existence.

Another drawback of Raghavan's blueprint is that it does not provide obvious space for incipits and explicits. Since pre-modern Indian literature is so vast, and still so under-studied, and because many works have similar titles, or exist in multiple recensions, an extract from the work can often be the only way of being sure what work one is seeing. Some cataloguers have realized this, and perhaps been influenced by the better "columnar" catalogues such as that of Peter Peterson.<sup>44</sup> These columnar catalogues include large appendices giving copious, essential extracts from the manuscripts. As a result, a useful compromise has sometimes been achieved. Works can be definitively identified, but the Raghavan blueprint is adhered to. Thus the catalogue still attracts publication funding.

Only a few cataloguing projects for Indian materials have brought together adequate funding and scholarly expertise. The descriptive work of Chandrabhāl Tripāṭhī on the Jaina manuscripts in Strasbourg stands out as an exemplary work from many points of view.<sup>45</sup> Tripāṭhī's "Introduction" to the work offers an excellent, concise treatise on many aspects of Indian manuscript studies, and the descriptive entries are a model of what can be achieved. The catalogues of David Pingree also stand out as models of the concise but detailed description of large collections.<sup>46</sup> Yet Pingree's catalogues are untypical because of their ability to depend so heavily on his literary-prosopographical *Census of the Exact Sciences in Sanskrit*.<sup>47</sup>

## 8 Future cataloguing

In the longer term, it is to be hoped that international cataloguing standards for manuscripts will spread, and influence work on Indian collections as elsewhere. Unfortunately, standards promoted by important bodies such as the American Library Association make not the least gesture towards the work of Indian manuscript cataloguing.<sup>48</sup> The work on manuscript description done in the context of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) shows promise for the Indian case, and TEI-

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<sup>44</sup> Peterson 1892.

<sup>45</sup> Tripāṭhī 1975.

<sup>46</sup> E.g., Pingree 1984, Pingree 2003, Pingree 2004, and Pingree 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Pingree 1970–1994.

<sup>48</sup> Pass 2003.

encoded records may become the standard for exchange and internet publication in the future.<sup>49</sup>

In the rare cases when funding becomes available for Indian manuscript cataloguing today, it is common for a database to be considered as a first step towards gaining bibliographical control over the collection. Unfortunately, because of the absence at the present time of an obvious, free standard cataloguing tool, individual projects typically implement their own local solutions, and these are often naïve from the point of view of data analysis and data normalisation. In the present author's experience, only one software tool implements an adequate data design for manuscript work, the Philobiblon database currently maintained by the Bancroft Library, University of California.<sup>50</sup> This tool, originally designed for work with Spanish, Portuguese and Catalan manuscripts, has been applied to Indian manuscript description with great success, due to its deep analysis of the generic data structures involved in cataloguing and prosopography.<sup>51</sup> Critically, Philobiblon provides separate tables for people, manuscripts, and works, and enforces normalisation and relational links between multi-value fields in these tables.<sup>52</sup> However, Philobiblon's software implementation and other factors mean that it remains a niche product, more useful as a model of superb data analysis than as a tool for widespread use in the cataloguing community.<sup>53</sup>

A future collaborative, open access, web-based cataloguing tool for manuscript description and prosopography will, it is ardently to be hoped, one day bring bibliographical control of the vast resources of Indian manuscript material within reach.

## 9 Textual criticism and editorial technique

Pre-modern Indian scribes and commentators often showed an awareness that the manuscript record before them contained imperfections.<sup>54</sup> To take but one example, from Sanskrit medical literature, the commentators Gayadāsa (ca. 1000) and Ḍalhaṇa (ca. 12<sup>th</sup> century) note many variant readings that were in circula-

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<sup>49</sup> The TEI Consortium 2010, chapter 10 "Manuscript description."

<sup>50</sup> <<http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/philobiblon/>>, consulted August 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Faulhaber 1991 provides an early description of the data model.

<sup>52</sup> There are, in fact, a small number of further tables, including geographical locations, institutions, and some other key data elements.

<sup>53</sup> Philobiblon is implemented in a Windows-based software environment called Advanced Revelation/Openinsight, that is a dialect of the Pick operating system.

<sup>54</sup> Colas 2001 (cf. Colas 1999), Colas 2011.

tion for the *Suśrutasaṃhitā* or “Compendium of Suśruta,” composed in the early centuries CE.<sup>55</sup> In parts of the text, they note that the manuscripts available to them had alternative readings to almost every verse. The variability of Suśruta’s text was so obvious even a millennium ago that it spurred the creation of a work of medieval textual criticism, Candrāṭa’s *Suśrutapāṭhaśuddhi*, “Correction of the readings in Suśruta,” probably written at about the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>56</sup>

The canons of textual criticism and the historical awareness of text variation and stemmatics that slowly evolved from Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614) through Richard Bentley (1662–1742), Karl Lachmann (1793–1851), Paul Maas (1880–1964), Giorgio Pasquali (1885–1952) and many others, are equally applicable to the Indian case. The most famous critical edition of a Sanskrit text is that of the 19-volume *Mahābhārata*, edited by S. V. Sukthankar, S. K. Belvalkar, and others.<sup>57</sup> Sukthankar’s “Prolegomena” to the edition introduced an Indian readership to text-critical methodology, and raised many of the special problems of editing Indian texts.<sup>58</sup> Many of these issues have continued to be discussed to the present day. The size of the manuscript record, however, can be daunting. Scholars of Indian philology and the cultural history of South Asia often lament the absence of critical editions of important texts, and the small numbers of scholars interested in undertaking critical editions. By and large, these fields are based on the study of 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century vulgate editions that were published in Bombay and Calcutta on the basis of a few locally available manuscripts and a policy of selecting “good” readings, with an uncritical attitude towards what constituted such readings.

However, there has been something of a revival of interest in textual criticism, stemmatics, and the creation of critical editions of Sanskrit and Prakrit works in the last two decades. Several admirable and theoretically interesting critical editions have been published,<sup>59</sup> and encouraging work continues in text-critical work and the discovery, description and analysis of manuscripts. The Nepalese-German Manuscript Cataloguing Project at the University of Hamburg is an exemplary project of this type.<sup>60</sup> The research into Indian manuscript stemmatics has

55 These commentators’ notes are available in the edition of Ācārya 1915. On Gayadāsa, see Meulenbeld 1999–2002, IA, 380–383; on Ḍaḥṇa, see *ibid.* 376–378.

56 Meulenbeld 1999–2002, IIA, 123.

57 Sukthankar et al. 1933–1959.

58 Sukthankar 1933. Katre 1941 was written at Sukthankar’s request, as a development of his “Prolegomena.”

59 Examples of exceptional interest from different points of view include Srinivasan 1967, Goodall / Isaacson 2003–, Olivelle / Olivelle 2005, Steinkellner 2007. Examples could easily be multiplied.

60 <[http://www.uni-hamburg.de/ngmcp/index\\_e.html](http://www.uni-hamburg.de/ngmcp/index_e.html)>, consulted in August 2011.



recently taken an interesting theoretical turn with the application of cladistic analysis software and the methods of evolutionary biology to Indian manuscript traditions.<sup>61</sup> Such approaches, which have been tried before in other contexts, are new to Indian philology. These methods offer the promise of analysing very large numbers of variant readings, and perhaps at last making tractable the pervasive problem of horizontal contamination.

In spite of these advances, which have mostly taken place at scholarly centres outside India, real progress in the recovery and deep understanding of the Indian literary heritage and the ocean of Indian manuscript sources that testify to it, will only come when Indian universities awake from their fascination with English, however valuable that may be, and begin teaching classical Indian languages on a wide scale, together with modern techniques of primary and secondary textual criticism. It remains to be seen whether this will happen before the Indian manuscript heritage has physically decayed beyond recovery.

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<sup>61</sup> Maas 2009, Maas 2010.

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Stefan Baums

# Gandhāran Scrolls: Rediscovering an Ancient Manuscript Type<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Introduction

Recent discoveries in ancient Gandhāra and its cultural sphere (modern eastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan) have brought to light a wealth of new material evidence for the oldest indigenous manuscript type of this region: birch-bark scrolls in a range of formats, the large majority of them inscribed with Buddhist texts in the Gāndhārī language (a Middle Indian dialect descended from Sanskrit and related to Pali and the Prakrits) and Kharoṣṭhī script (an adaptation of the Aramaic script for the writing of Indian texts).<sup>2</sup> Prior to these new discoveries, only one single manuscript of this kind was known to scholarship – a long scroll containing a Gāndhārī version of the *Dharmapada*, found outside the center of Gandhāran culture near Khotan on the Southern Silk Road (Brough 1962) – but stray reports (summarized in Salomon 1999, 57–68) had already made it likely that a substantial number of Gandhāran scroll manuscripts had once existed and might be recovered. This process of recovery is now well underway and shows no signs of abating, new discoveries of Gāndhārī manuscripts and inscriptions being announced at frequent intervals. Restricting ourselves to those manuscripts that at this point have received at least a preliminary description in print, we now know of more than 89 Gandhāran birch-bark scrolls written by more than 51 different scribes and containing approximately 115 distinct texts from a wide range of literary genres (including sūtras, canonical verse texts, vinaya texts, stotras, episodes from the life of the Buddha, accounts of previous and future buddhas, story collections, commentaries on canonical texts, scholastic treatises, Mahāyāna sūtras, magical texts, a verse abecedary, a treatise on statecraft, a letter and a text inventory). One of these sūtras (BL 6, see section 6) is written in Sanskrit

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks are due to Ingo Strauch (Lausanne) for access to unpublished material in the Bajaur Collection, to Reinhard Lehmann (Mainz) for information on the Aramaic scribal tradition, and to Jan-Ulrich Sobisch (Copenhagen) for inviting me to present the paper from which this article evolved. It was completed at Bukkyo University in Kyoto, and I would like to thank the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai for making this visit possible as well as my colleagues in Kyoto for providing such a friendly and productive environment.

<sup>2</sup> The following abbreviations are used to refer to this material: BC (Bajaur Collection), BL (British Library Collection), Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> (Gāndhārī *Dharmapada* from Khotan), LC (Library of Congress scroll), RS (Robert Senior Collection) and SC ('Split' Collection).

using the Brāhmī script, and the treatise on statecraft is written in Sanskrit using the Kharoṣṭhī script. The exact findspots and archeological contexts of the large majority of these scrolls are regrettably unknown because they were not found in archeological excavations, but only reached scholars after being traded on the art market; only the provenience of the Bajaur collection can be established more or less reliably from information provided by the finder. On the basis of palaeographic and linguistic features as well as radiocarbon analysis, the scrolls can be dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE, and there are indications that at least some of them are as old as the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE (Salomon 1999, 141–155, Allon/Salomon/Jacobsen/Zoppi 2006, Falk 2011, 19–20). In addition to these more than 89 Gandhāran birch-bark scrolls, discoveries at Bamiyan in central Afghanistan have produced around 275 fragments of palm-leaf manuscripts in Kharoṣṭhī script, written by ca. 50 scribes and containing an undetermined number of texts; a few further specimens of such palm-leaf manuscripts were found in Central Asia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Salomon 1998, Vorob'eva-Desiatovskaia 2006). Table 1 provides an overview of the scroll and Kharoṣṭhī palm-leaf material now at our disposal (updating the table in Salomon 2009, 33).

Sections 3–5 of this article provide a comprehensive description of the construction and use of Gandhāran scrolls, on the basis of a detailed investigation of ten well-preserved published scrolls supplemented by information from the body of unpublished material.<sup>3</sup> Section 6 presents a new hypothesis concerning the origin of this format.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 Source material

The ten scrolls forming the focus of this study were found in three different manuscript deposits. Six of them (BL 1, BL 5B, BL 9, BL 12 + 14, BL 13 and BL 16 + 25) were among the first new discovery of Gāndhārī manuscripts, in a clay pot from a Dharmaguptaka monastery (Salomon 1999, pl. 5), and were acquired by the British Library in 1994; they probably date to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. Three more scrolls (RS 5, RS 14, RS 19) belong to the second new discovery, in a clay pot bearing a relic-ded-

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<sup>3</sup> The following seven scrolls have been published but are too fragmentary to be used as core material for this study: BL 2 (Lenz 2010, 95), BL 3A (Lenz 2010, 105), BL 3B (Baums 2009, 269), BL 5A (Salomon 2000, 218), BL 7 (Baums 2009, 67–69), BL 18 (Baums 2009, 67–69) and BL 21 (Lenz 2010).

<sup>4</sup> The principal earlier discussions of the Gandhāran scroll format are Senart 1898, 198–200, Kaye 1927, 7–10, Janert 1955/56, 65–74 and Brough 1962, 18 (Khotan *Dharmapada*), Salomon 1999, 87–109 (Khotan *Dharmapada* and BL Collection) and Strauch 2008, 106–108 (Bajaur Collection).

**Tab. 1:** Overview of Gandhāran scrolls and Kharoṣṭhī palm-leaf manuscripts

| Collection or manuscript         | Provenience and date                                   | Contents                                                   | Container                                   | References                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| British Library Collection       | unknown<br>1st c. CE(?)                                | 28 birch-bark scrolls by 21 scribes                        | clay pot donated to a Dharmagupta monastery | Salomon 1999, Salomon 2014, 4–6                                                                 |
| Bajaur Collection                | Mian Kili, Dir, Pakistan<br>1st c. CE(?)               | 18 birch-bark scrolls by 18 scribes                        | rectangular stone compartment in monastery  | Strauch 2008, Falk/Strauch 2014                                                                 |
| Library of Congress scroll       | unknown<br>1st c. CE(?)                                | one birch-bark scroll by two scribes                       | unknown                                     | Salomon/Baums 2007, Salomon 2014, 8–9                                                           |
| ‘New’ or ‘Split’ Collection      | unknown<br>1st – 2nd c. CE                             | more than 16 birch-bark scrolls by more than seven scribes | unknown                                     | Baums 2009, 38–39, 42, Allon/Salomon 2010, 11, Falk 2011, Salomon 2014, 9–10, Falk/Strauch 2014 |
| Senior Collection                | unknown<br>2nd c. CE                                   | 24 birch-bark scrolls by one scribe                        | clay pot with relic-donation inscription    | Salomon 2003, Allon 2007, Allon 2014                                                            |
| Khotan <i>Dharmapada</i>         | Kohmari Mazar, Xinjiang, China<br>2nd c. CE(?)         | one birch-bark scroll by one scribe                        | next to clay vessel in cave                 | Brough 1962                                                                                     |
| University of Washington scroll  | unknown<br>2nd c. CE(?)                                | one birch-bark scroll by one scribe                        | unknown                                     | Glass 2004, 141–142, Cox 2014, 39                                                               |
| Bamiyan fragments                | Bamiyan, Afghanistan<br>2nd – 4th c. CE                | ca. 275 palm-leaf fragments by ca. 50 scribes              | unknown                                     | Allon/Salomon 2000, Salomon 2014, 6–8                                                           |
| Pelliot and Ol’denburg fragments | Northern Silk Road, Xinjiang, China<br>2nd – 4th c. CE | nine palm-leaf fragments by four or more scribes           | unknown                                     | Salomon 1998, Vorob’eva-Desiatovskaia 2006                                                      |

ication formula dated to the year 12 (probably of the Kaniṣka era, and thus corresponding to 140 CE), and are part of the private collection of Robert Senior. The

tenth scroll (Dhp-G<sup>K</sup>) was discovered in 1892 near Khotan and is now preserved partly in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, partly in the Institute for Eastern Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg; it probably dates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

It is apparent at first glance that these scrolls have two different physical formats. Five of them (BL 1, BL 9, BL 12 + 14, BL 13 and Dhp-G<sup>K</sup>) are narrow but long, with widths ranging from 14 to 21 cm and original heights of up to 250 and 500 cm (in the two cases where this can be estimated reliably; Figure 1). The other physical type (BL 5B, BL 16 + 25,<sup>5</sup> RS 5, RS 14 and RS 19) consists of somewhat wider but much shorter scrolls, with widths from ca. 20 to 27 cm and heights from 17.2 to 44.4 cm (Figure 2). These manuscripts contain a variety of textual genres that do not have any obvious correlation with their physical types: two collections of sūtras (BL 12 + 14, RS 5) and one individual sūtra (RS 19), four canonical verse texts (BL 1, BL 5B, BL 16 + 25, RS 14), and one commentary on an anthology of canonical verses spread over at least three scrolls, two of which (BL 9, BL 13) are included in this study. In four of the scrolls, the primary text is followed by a secondary text: another verse commentary on scroll BL 13, and story sketches on scrolls BL 1, BL 12 + 14 and BL 16 + 25. The primary texts of these scrolls were produced by five different scribes; a sixth scribe added the story sketches to scrolls BL 1, BL 12 + 14 and BL 16 + 25, and a seventh scribe added the second commentary to scroll BL 13 (see Table 2 for further details).

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<sup>5</sup> The extant portion of this scroll consists of a single sheet with a width of 23 cm and a preserved height of 40.5 cm, placing it squarely in the range of the short-format scrolls. Its overall proportions most closely resemble those of scroll BL 5B from the same manuscript deposit (Table 2 and Figure 3). Lenz 2003 does not discuss the construction of the scroll, but needle holes are clearly visible to the left of lines 18, 21–22, 25, 29–37, 41–43 and 46 on his plates 6 and 7. While stitched margins are more typical of long-format scrolls, they do occur with short-format scrolls, and one of the two other clear examples is again scroll BL 5B (section 3). The content of scroll BL 16 + 25 corresponds to the last thirteen verses of the second chapter of the Khotan *Dharmapada*, providing a parallel with the short-format scroll RS 14 which contains the first chapter of the *Anavataptagāthā* and probably formed the first of a set of scrolls (Salomon 2008, 10–11, 330–331). If scroll BL 16 + 25 was also part of a set, inscribed on the recto only and containing the first two chapters of a *Dharmapada* (pace Norman 2004, 118–119; section 4), then the lost text – requiring ca. 89 cm of vertical space – can be distributed between two lost scrolls with a height of 43 cm each and a lost strip with a height of 3 cm at the top of BL 16 + 25, resulting in three evenly-sized scrolls with a height very close to that of BL 5B. Finally, BL 16 + 26 was clearly folded in half horizontally (Lenz 2003, 3–4), another characteristic of short-format scrolls (section 5).



**Fig. 1:** Long-format Gandhāran scroll BL 9 (Baums 2009, pl. 3–9).



Fig. 2: Short-format Gandhāran scroll RS 5 (Glass 2007, pl. 1).

### 3 Production

The raw material of Gandhāran scrolls was the periderm of one or more birch species (especially *Betula utilis*).<sup>6</sup> This living tissue separates the dead outer bark of the tree from the living inner bark and itself consists of three functional layers: cork tissue, cork cambium and cork cortex (Yamauchi 2009, 15–16). Embedded in and crossing through these layers are numerous lenticels, porous areas that have

<sup>6</sup> Previous discussions include Bühler 1877, 1896, 88, Janert 1955/56, 65–72 and Vorob'eva-Desiatovskaia 1987–88, 27–38.



the shape of narrow horizontal ellipses and that are responsible for the exchange of gases between the environment and the inner bark of the tree. The periderm of the tree stem is further crossed by the wooden tissue of twigs that grow out of it.

The use of bark as writing material in early Gandhāra is confirmed by the Roman historian Curtius Rufus, who in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE writes in his history of Alexander the Great:

libri arborum teneri haud secus quam chartae litterarum notas capiunt.<sup>7</sup>

A passage from the *Māṇḍikāvadāna* (in the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya* and the *Divyāvadāna*) lists birch bark and writing utensils that are used at a recital of Buddhist texts, presumably to reduce part of the oral transmission and explanation to writing:

etā dārikā rātrau pradīpena buddhavacanāṃ paṭhanti. atra bhūrjēna prayojanāṃ tailena masinā kamalayā tūlena.<sup>8</sup>

Writing on birch bark is most famously evoked in classical Sanskrit literature by Kālidāsa at the beginning of his *Kumārasambhava*, where the Himālaya is described as:

nyastākṣarā dhāturasena yatra bhūrjatvacāḥ<sup>9</sup>

and, especially, in the second act of his drama *Vikramorvaśīya*, where the heroine Urvaśī uses an improvised birch-bark letter to confess her love to the king who on receiving it exclaims:

bhūrjapatragatoyam akṣaravinyāsaḥ<sup>10</sup>

(see Janert 1955/56, 65–66 for further details of the description of the bark in this passage).

7 '(Sheets of) tree bark, hardly less supple than (papyrus?) sheets, capture the records of literature.' – It is unclear whether this was the case in the time of Alexander himself or is an anachronism introduced by Curtius Rufus on the basis of contemporary practice; cf. section 6 on Nearchus's reference to cloth letters.

8 'These girls recite the word of the Buddha at night by lamplight. Birch bark, oil, ink, a pen and cotton are needed for this.'

9 'Where birch skins are inscribed with letters by means of mineral liquid.'

10 'It is an inscription of letters on a birch sheet!'

Tab. 2: Overview of ten Gandhāran scrolls (arranged by width)

|                    | Dimensions (cm)              | Construc-<br>tion | Scribes                      | Content                                               | Description                                           |
|--------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| BL 9               | 14 × 118.6 + x               | multi-sheet       | BL scribe 4                  | commentary                                            | Baums 2009, 67–69                                     |
| BL 13              | 14 × 70.3 + x                | multi-sheet       | BL scribe 4,<br>BL scribe 14 | commentary,<br>commentary                             | Baums 2009, 67–69                                     |
| BL 1               | 15.1 × ca. 250 <sup>11</sup> | multi-sheet       | BL scribe 1,<br>BL scribe 2  | <i>Anavataptagāthā</i> ,<br>story sketches            | Salomon 2008, 83–87, Lenz 2010, 51 <sup>12</sup>      |
| BL 12 + 14         | ca. 15.5 × 76 + x            | multi-sheet       | BL scribe 1,<br>BL scribe 2  | three <i>Ekottarikāgama</i><br>sūtras, story sketches | Allon 2001, 42–45                                     |
| Dhp-G <sup>K</sup> | 21 × ca. 500                 | multi-sheet       | Dhp-G <sup>K</sup><br>scribe | <i>Dharmapada</i>                                     | Brough 1962, 18–19, Salomon 1999, 96–98 <sup>13</sup> |
| RS 14              | ca. 20 × ca. 30              | single-sheet      | RS scribe                    | part of<br><i>Anavataptagāthā</i>                     | Salomon 2008, 329–330                                 |
| BL 16 + 25         | 23 × ca. 43(?)               | single-sheet(?)   | BL scribe 1,<br>BL scribe 2  | part of <i>Dharmapada</i> ,<br>story sketches         | Lenz 2003, 3–7                                        |
| RS 5               | 26.8 × 27.6                  | single-sheet      | RS scribe                    | four <i>Samyuktāgama</i><br>sūtras                    | Glass 2007, 72–73                                     |
| RS 19              | 20.9 × 17.2                  | single-sheet      | RS scribe                    | one <i>Samyuktāgama</i><br>sūtra                      | Lee 2009, 3                                           |
| BL 5B              | 27 × 44.4                    | single-sheet      | BL scribe 9                  | <i>Khaḍgaviṣāṇasūtra</i>                              | Salomon 2000, 23–27                                   |

<sup>11</sup> The preserved part of this scroll measures 159.8 cm in height (Salomon 2008, 84), and it cannot be ruled out that this represents most of its original size, which would make it the second of a set of two scrolls, originally inscribed with the *Anavataptagāthā* on one side only, with story sketches added later on the empty spaces of at least the second scroll. This would provide a better match of scroll BL 1 with the general pattern of the British Library Collection, in which most or all of the scrolls appear to have fallen well short of 200 cm in length and where in all clear cases only small amounts of material are missing from the tops of scrolls, but in the absence of positive evidence for such a disposition of scroll BL 1 and pending further reconstructions of scrolls from the British Library Collection, the editor's proposal is tentatively followed here.

<sup>12</sup> The dimensions given by Salomon and Lenz differ slightly. The former are followed here.

<sup>13</sup> The empty top of the first sheet of this scroll is not included in any of the published plates. The visible portion of this sheet is 40.6 cm high (Salomon 1999, 97), and its total height is here estimated as 45 cm.

We have little information about the production process of Gandhāran scrolls, beyond what can be deduced from the available specimens. This is partly because the use of scrolls died out in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE and the use of birch bark for other manuscripts ceased in the 17<sup>th</sup> century CE (see section 6), partly because there are few references to the preparation of birch-bark manuscripts in South Asian literature.<sup>14</sup> The only external description is provided by the 11<sup>th</sup>-century Persian scholar and traveler Alberuni who writes (Sachau 1888, I 171):

In Central and Northern India people use the bark of the *tûz* tree [...]. It is called *bhûrja*. They take a piece one yard long and as broad as the outstretched fingers of the hand, or somewhat less, and prepare it in various ways. They oil and polish it so as to make it hard and smooth, and then they write on it. [...] Their letters, and whatever else they have to write, they write on the bark of the *tûz* tree.

Each sheet of early Gandhāran birch-bark manuscripts, whether in scroll or other formats, was made from one single piece of bark as harvested from the tree, and there was no process of laminating several pieces to form a sheet. For the palm-leaf-inspired pothi format, this had already been observed by Hoernle 1893–1912, xix, who speaks of “several layers of periderm” (i.e., a feature of the natural anatomy of the bark), and it was further demonstrated by Kaye 1927, 10, who observed that the same lenticels are visible on the recto and on the verso of the Bakhshali manuscript.<sup>15</sup> It was confirmed by the examination of birch-bark manuscript fragments from Bamiyan (7<sup>th</sup> century CE; Yamauchi 2009, 24, 35–36) as well as of folio 364 of the Gilgit *Dirghāgama* manuscript (8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century CE; Jinkyong Choi, personal communication). That the same holds true of the two main types of Gandhāran scroll is apparent from an examination of the lower edge of the short-format scroll RS 5 (Glass 2007, pl. 1 and 2) and of the long-format scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> (Brough 1962, pl. XIII and XIV). The natural layers of birch bark do, however, tend to separate as the bark ages, and the application of oil described

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<sup>14</sup> Urvaśī’s letter is written, on the spur of the moment, on bark torn straight from the tree, but this cannot be indicative of the general procedure. The available specimens all show that birch-bark manuscripts were very carefully planned and constructed, and from the living inner bark rather than from the inferior outermost layers of bark shed by the tree. The passage in the *Māhādikāvadāna* provides more detail, but the purpose of some of the materials listed there – particularly the oil and cotton – remains unclear.

<sup>15</sup> The statement in Sander 1968, 28 (“mehr[e] dünn[e], aufeinandergeklebte Schichten”) appears to be based on a misunderstanding of Hoernle’s description. The formulation in Salomon 1999, 107 (“component layers or laminations”) is not clear, but that in Salomon 2000, 23–24 (“only two laminated layers [...] written on a single, unusually large and fine piece of bark”) suggests a correct understanding of the situation. For the sake of clarity, the terms ‘lamination’ and ‘laminated’ should be avoided in future discussions of birch-bark manuscripts.

by Alberuni (and possibly alluded to in the *Māṇḍikāvadāna*) may partly serve to introduce additional, more permanent adhesive between the layers of the bark (cf. Yamauchi 2009, 48–49 for a similar experimental procedure applied in modern conservation). Another effect of the oil may have been an increased capability of the bark surface to attract and retain ink particles.

The polishing of the sheets mentioned by Alberuni also appears to have improved the suitability of the bark surface for writing. Yamauchi 2009, 27–28 reports that lenticels are slightly dented on the outer surface of the birch bark and slightly raised on the inner surface, and since in Alberuni's time birch-bark sheets were regularly inscribed on both sides, it would have been desirable to level the protruding ends of the lenticels. This leveling had less positive effect on embedded wooden tissue, and these areas remained difficult to write on (see section 4). Yet another possible treatment of the bark surface was suggested by the analysis of seventh-century birch-bark fragments from Bamiyan which found possible traces of yellow pigment (Yamauchi 2009, 4, 23, 36) although no remnants of coloring were visible on the bark. None of these methods of bark preparation (oiling, polishing and coloring) should be uncritically projected back by more than five hundred years onto the early Gandhāran scroll tradition, but they do suggest what to look for when physical analyses of the scrolls are carried out.

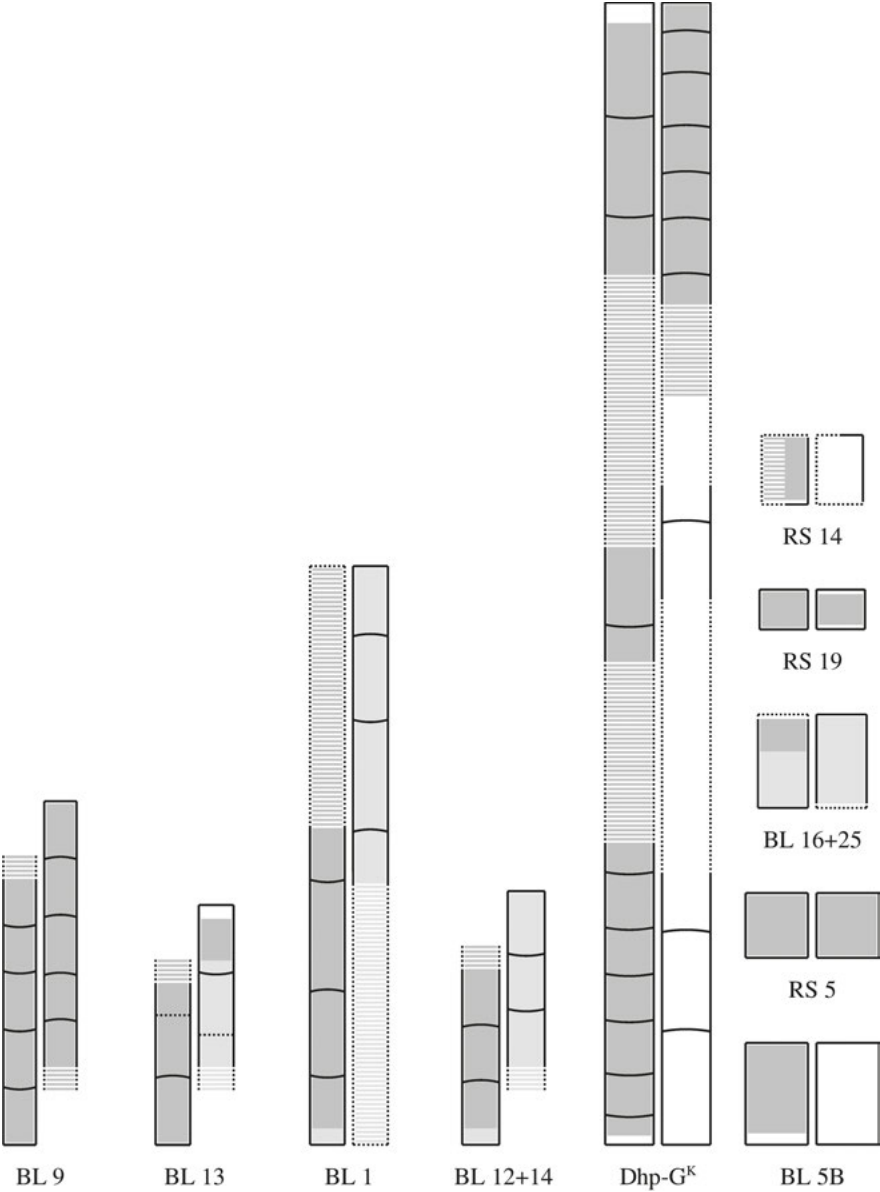
According to Alberuni, the strips of bark harvested from the trees measured approximately 25 cm in width and 100 cm in height. Since removal of the inner bark interrupts the conveyance of water and nutrients inside the tree, the maximum width of the harvested strip (corresponding to approximately one quarter of the circumference of a full-grown birch tree) was probably at least partly determined by the need to keep the tree alive for future use. Another influence will have been the target width of the finished sheets, which in turn was conditioned by ease of use as well as the historical origin of the Gandhāran scroll format (see section 6). The height of the harvested strip would appear to be the maximum that could be conveniently removed without the help of a ladder (since the very foot of the tree where the stem widens into the root system would not have yielded suitable bark). If the same procedure was followed in early Gandhāra, then the sheets for the short-format scrolls were simply derived by cutting the harvested and prepared strip into three or four pieces.

The construction of the long-format scrolls (called *pustaka*; Falk 1993, 305–306, Salomon 1999, 87) was considerably more complicated. The easiest way to form a scroll that is 250 cm (BL 1) or 500 cm (Dhp-G<sup>K</sup>) high would seem to be the vertical joining of three, four or five of the harvested bark strips, and this is what Senart 1898, 199 and Hoernle 1900, 125–126 (the latter with reference to Alberuni's description) suggested for scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> (the only Gandhāran scroll known at the time) whose preserved sections happen to be ca. 118.8 cm,

48.9 cm and 131.4 cm high. Kaye 1927, 10, on the other hand, was familiar with the construction of Egyptian papyrus scrolls from individual sheets that are glued together (cf. section 6) and suggested a similar construction for scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup>, but could not see any positive evidence for this in Senart's plates. Janert 1955/56, 73 (referring to Hoernle but unaware of Kaye) reverted to the idea that harvested birch-bark strips were used in their full size, but goes even further and suggests that scrolls were made from one single piece of bark, which in view of the great height of the Khotan *Dharmapada* scroll was quite implausible. Brough 1962, 18–19 does not address the question of component sheets in his brief remarks on scroll construction.

The discovery of the twenty-eight Gandhāran scrolls that are now preserved in the British Library (approximately half of which belong to the long-format type) finally provided new evidence to decide the question and prompted Salomon 1999, 92–98 to reexamine scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup>. As it turns out, all long-format scrolls now known, including scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup>, are made from several sheets that are vertically attached to each other in the manner described below. The orientation of each sheet within the scroll is such that the lenticels are parallel to the upper and lower end of the scroll and perpendicular to its left and right margin, thus either following the orientation in which the bark was attached to the birch tree, turning it upside down or a combination of both possibilities. As a consequence, the direction in which the scroll is folded (from bottom to top) is perpendicular to the bark's natural curvature around the tree trunk (left and right), and it is possible that this choice was made in order to ensure that the scroll would lie flat during use.

In the five clear cases of long-format scrolls in this study, the heights of the component sheets range from an exceptionally short 13.1 cm through 17.5 cm up to 49 cm and thus correspond very closely to the range of heights of the short-format scrolls (17.2 cm to 44 cm). In contrast with this, the widths of the component sheets (and of the long-format scrolls that they build) range from 14 cm to 21 cm and are thus considerably narrower than the widths of the short-format scrolls (ca. 20 cm to 27 cm; see Table 3). For production of the Khotan *Dharmapada* scroll, the individual sheets were arranged in decreasing order of height from the top to the bottom of the scroll (looking at the recto), and the same may be true of scroll BL 1 (Salomon 2009, 86; Figure 3). In scroll BL 12 + 14, on the other hand, the bottommost sheet is larger than the next sheet up (looking at the recto), and the two bottom sheets of scroll BL 13 are exactly equal in size. The same is true of the three bottom sheets of scroll BL 9, to the top of which is joined at least one shorter sheet. The sequences of equally-sized sheets in scrolls BL 9 and BL 13 were probably produced either by folding the harvested strip over on itself or by superimposing roughly cut sheets, and then trimming them to the same size with



**Fig. 3:** Dimensions, construction and text layout of ten Gandhāran scrolls. (Curved lines indicate the direction of overlap of sheets. Dotted lines mark reconstructed portions of scrolls. Dark grey shading is used for the original texts of scrolls, light grey for secondary texts added to them.)



a knife, as suggested by evidence from the long-format scroll LC. This scroll has two large square holes, about four millimeters in diameter, in the same relative position just above a join on its first and second preserved sheets. The text of the scroll avoids these holes (see section 4), showing that the damage was caused prior to inscribing. The corresponding positions of the holes make it most likely that they were caused by accidental piercing with a pointed object – maybe a knife – while they were superimposed for cutting to the same size. The surrounding bark indicates that the object was twisted counterclockwise (looking at the recto) while penetrating the sheets.

**Tab. 3:** Sheet sizes of five long-format Gandhāran scrolls

|                    | Width of sheets (cm) | Heights of sheets (cm)                            |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| BL 9               | 14                   | 19.8, 25.2, 25.2, 25                              |
| BL 13              | 14                   | 27, 29                                            |
| BL 1               | 15.1                 | 49, 36, 30                                        |
| BL 12 + 14         | ca. 15.5             | 23.5, 27                                          |
| Dhp-G <sup>K</sup> | 21                   | ca. 45, 46.9 ... 23.5, 20.4, 20, 23.1, 17.5, 13.1 |

All known long-format scrolls are incomplete, but the original heights of two of them (BL 1 and Dhp-G<sup>K</sup>) can be calculated with a fair degree of accuracy from their content, and the original number of sheets used in their construction can thus be estimated. Salomon 1999, 96–97 presented an estimate for Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> on the basis of the schematic representation of the scroll in Brough 1962, 11, not realizing that this drawing does not accurately represent the proportions of the scroll (see Figure 3), and that the heights of its two missing portions have been additionally reduced to fit the drawing onto the page. Assuming with Brough that the first gap in the preserved scroll (between fragments B and A) is somewhat larger than the second (between fragments A and C), and assuming with Salomon that the size of sheets decreased regularly from the top to the bottom of the scroll, an additional two sheets need to be reconstructed between Salomon’s sheets 3 and 4, and one additional sheet between sheets 5 and 6. The total number of sheets making up the scroll is thus likely to have been fifteen. A similar estimate can be made for scroll BL 1 on the assumption that the preserved portion of the scroll represents about one half of its original length (Salomon 2008, 84; but see note on Table 2 and compare Figure 3). The complete scroll would then have been made from six sheets.

As in Egyptian papyrus scrolls (see section 6), the sheets of Gandhāran birch-bark scrolls are primarily joined to each other by an undetermined type of glue which is applied to the bottom two or three centimeters of one side of one sheet to paste it onto or under the top of the following sheet. Following papyrological practice (Porten 1979, 78), these areas of a scroll where one sheet is joined to the next will be referred to as joins. Sometimes excessive application of glue appears to have led to a crinkled surface in the finished scroll (Salomon 1999, 96). In the current condition of many Gandhāran scrolls, the glue has lost its adhesive power and sheets have become separated (cf. Salomon 1999, 93 fig. 9). To avoid such separation during the anticipated lifetime of scrolls, their joins were often reinforced with threads stitched across them. Three patterns of stitching have been observed so far: (1) In the scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup>, two short vertical lines of stitches cross the join. These lines are between 1.7 cm and 3.5 cm long and between 3.5 and 6.5 cm distant from the outer margins of the scroll (Salomon 1999, 96; Figure 4). In his first description of these join-reinforcing stitches, Salomon suggested they were peculiar to scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> and that no reinforcements were used in the BL scrolls, but closer examination has since revealed join-reinforcing stitches in all four long-format scrolls described in this article as well as in other long-format scrolls. (2) In scrolls BL 1, BL 9, BL 12 + 14 and BL 13, a single line of stitches ca. 2.5 cm in length crosses each join in its horizontal center. Although the thread has disintegrated in these scrolls, the needle holes through which it passed are clearly visible on inspection (Allon 2001, pl. 6, Salomon 2008, 86). Only the joins between the first and second preserved sheets of BL 9 (fourth and fifth from the bottom) and BL 13 (second and third from the bottom) lack visible stitch marks, and it is possible that these two pairs of sheet were irregularly joined by glue only (Baums 2009, 68). Together with the fact that the sheets below the unstitched joins in these scrolls are equally-sized, whereas the ones above are observably (BL 9) or potentially (BL 13) of different sizes (see above), this suggests that in these two

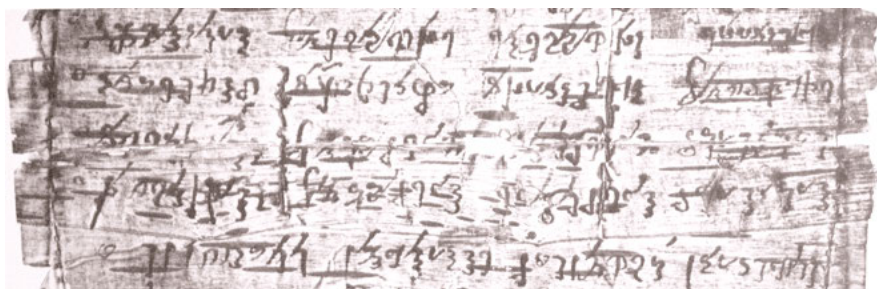


Fig. 4: Margin threads and join-reinforcing threads in scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> (Senart 1898, pl. III).

cases pre-existing scrolls of three and two sheets were secondarily extended by the addition of at least one more sheet at their top. (3) In the unpublished scroll BL 15, the join-reinforcing stitches take the form of a broad zig-zag pattern from the left to the right margin in which the individual lines of the zig-zag are ca. 2 cm long and meet each other at right angles (see, e.g., frame 30; Figure 5). In scroll LC, a narrower zig-zag pattern in which the lines meet each other at sixty-degree angles similarly follows the join.<sup>16</sup>



**Fig. 5:** Join-reinforcing thread (needle holes) in scroll BL 15 (courtesy of The British Library Board).

In some scrolls the overlapping of the individual sheets follows a single consistent pattern (Figure 3). Throughout the preserved portions of scrolls BL 9 and Dhp-G<sup>K</sup>, of any pair of sheets the one that is closer to the top of the scroll (looking at its recto) is glued and stitched onto the one that is closer to the bottom. This pattern appears to be reversed in scroll BL 12 + 14, where the three preserved sheets are joined so that of any pair the lower one (looking at the recto) lies on top of the higher one, and the same may be true of scroll BL 13 (even though it forms a set with scroll BL 9) where, however, the direction of overlap of the first and second sheets could not be determined with certainty.

The long format is further characterized by threads stitched along the left and right margins, all the way from the top to the bottom of a scroll, at a distance of 0.5 to 1.0 cm from the edge of the bark. These threads are mostly preserved in scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> (Figure 4). In the long-format BL scrolls they have disintegrated except for small remnants, but needle holes attest to their presence where the margin itself is preserved. Most likely the purpose of these margin threads was to increase the vertical cohesion of the scroll (Salomon 1999, 94). Frequent folding of a scroll would result in horizontal cracks and eventually in the separation of

<sup>16</sup> The rightmost part of one of the joins of scroll BC 2 has been additionally reinforced by a patch of birch bark glued over its verso (Strauch 2008, 107), but this isolated case is best regarded as an improvised repair of a specific problem, not as an additional type of join reinforcement.

the bark into horizontal strips. The margin threads would slow down this process by preventing vertical overextension of the scroll, and if the bark did separate along a horizontal crack the threads would still provide a minimal amount of vertical cohesion and prevent the scroll from splitting altogether. One negative consequence of sewing threads down the margins was the resulting perforation that led to a tendency for the left and right edges of scrolls to break off. The benefit of increased vertical cohesion appears to have outweighed the drawback of weakened margins during the lifetime of the scrolls, but in the centuries since their disposal some scrolls (notably the BL scrolls) have suffered a complete disintegration of their margin threads, followed by a destruction of their edges along the exposed perforation. While characteristic of the long format, margin stitching in some rare cases also occurs in short-format scrolls. The only clear examples are scroll BL 5B, the exceptionally long short-format scroll RS 12 and probably also scroll BL 16 + 25 (see section 4 below). The unique scroll BL 3A has strips of what appears to be coarse birch bark, approximately 1.5 cm in width, pasted down the recto and verso of the preserved left margin and taking the place of margin stitching (not noted by the editor, but clearly visible in Lenz 2003, fig. 18–19 and Lenz 2010, pl. 22–25). It is uncertain whether this scroll belongs to the long or short format.

There is no evidence that a roller (such as a cylindrical piece of wood) was attached to the bottom of any of the long-format scrolls. Brough 1962, 12 suggested that “a manuscript of birch-bark would suffer less in being used if it were rolled than it would if folded” and that “[i]f a roll was the original intention, it must be assumed that it was wound round a cylinder, possibly of wood, since the end of [fragment] N, which would have been the innermost part, shows no signs of the tight folding which is characteristic of most paper strips which have been rolled without a centre-piece.” In fact, however, the bottom of scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> shows exactly the kind of damage that would be caused by folding without a roller and that occurs frequently among the BL scrolls: a piece corresponding to two strips of the folded-up scroll has broken off along horizontal cracks, leaving a gap one strip from the very end of the scroll. Observing this, Salomon 1999, 101 still attempted to use it as an argument in favor of the original presence of a roller since “[t]his damage could have been inflicted when the scroll was separated from such a rolling cylinder to which it had been pasted or otherwise attached.” The detached fragments are, however, preserved and can be inspected on plates IV and XVIII of Brough 1962, where their recto is empty and their verso carries the partial lines numbered 367–370. The surface of the recto does not show any irregularity or damage that might have been caused by attachment to a roller, but the left-hand portion does display the kind of horizontal crack that is indicative of tight folding and that, one strip up and down, did lead to the detachment of

these fragments. The other piece of evidence that Salomon adduced in favor of the use of rollers are two small holes near the bottom of scroll BL 12 + 14. But in the description of Allon 2001, 44, “[t]he hole on the left side of the recto is about 2.5 cm from the original bottom margin of the manuscript, and the hole on the right is about 1.4 cm from the bottom,” whereas one would expect them to be at the same height if they were caused by pins attaching the bottom of the scroll to a roller. Allon continues to remark that if they were caused by such pins, then “the bark would have been pinned onto the roller from the verso side, which formed the original outside of the scroll.” This would have subverted the purpose of a roller since the scroll, rolled up with its recto facing the inside (see section 5), could then only have gone around the roller after a very sharp crease at the point of attachment which would have led to the speedy separation of the roller itself. The available evidence thus indicates that no rollers were attached to the bottoms of Gandhāran scrolls.

## 4 Inscribing

The principal writing utensils available in Gandhāra and suitable for birch bark were pens (made from reeds or similar material) and brushes (Bühler 1896, 92, Janert 1955/56, 87, Sander 1968, 35–36). Many Gandhāran manuscripts show signs of having been written with a hollow pen whose nib was split to conduct ink from the inside to the tip and angled to accommodate the handedness of the scribe: split letter strokes where the ink ran low and varying widths of strokes depending on their direction (Glass 2000, 28–30). The use of pens in Gandhāra is further indicated by two replica copper pens found at Taxila (Marshall 1951, II 598). It is safe to assume that pens were the regular writing utensil, but the occasional use of brushes cannot be ruled out.

The ink used for Gandhāran manuscripts is black and presumably soot-based (notwithstanding Kālidāsa’s poetic *dhāturasa*; section 3). Janert 1955/56, 87–96 lists various ink recipes used in ancient and medieval India and summarizes the report of Bühler 1877, 30 according to which the ink used for later Kashmiri birch-bark manuscripts was made from burnt almonds boiled in cow urine, which in combination with birch bark produced waterproof writing. The recipe of early Gandhāran ink will remain unknown until a detailed analysis is carried out on a sample of the material. Concerning the water resistance of the later Kashmiri ink, we observe that there are no clear cases of ink erasure due to water damage in the early Gandhāran manuscript material, with the possible exception of scroll BC 13, one side of which contains an area of faded writing that by its shape suggests the

spread of a liquid. A scribal method of erasing an erroneous akṣara consists in smudging it out (Glass 2000, 148), but since this type of erasure would be carried out before the ink was dry it cannot be taken as a sign of water-soluble ink. The only known palimpsests among Gandhāran manuscripts are written on palm leaf, and in these cases the application of another solvent than water cannot be ruled out.

In the act of writing, scribes avoided uneven areas of the scroll, especially embedded wooden tissue (cf. Salomon 2008, pl. 17), join-reinforcing threads and the edges where sheets overlap with each other.<sup>17</sup> The usual procedure for rough spots in the bark is quite simply to skip them, but occasionally (e.g., on the recto of scroll LC) they are marked with horizontal lines to show they have been left empty on purpose. In some manuscripts, particularly the BC scrolls, the verso of the scroll (corresponding to the inner side of the birch tree's periderm) has a much coarser texture than the recto, but this did not in and of itself prevent its use for writing.

In most long-format and some short-format scrolls, the horizontal delimitation of the text area was provided by the threads running down the left and right margins. Two of the BC scrolls (long-format BC 3 and short-format BC 5) do not feature margin threads, but have ink lines drawn down the margins where a thread would have run, illustrating how margin threads had come to be perceived as an integral part of text layout (Strauch 2008, 107).<sup>18</sup> The sculpture shown in Figure 6 goes to the length of reproducing the margin threads or corresponding ink lines of two scrolls in stone, further illustrating their importance for the Gandhāran scroll format. Vertically, the text area can in principle extend all the way to the bottom of the writing surface, but it may stop a little short if the end of a textual subdivision occurs just before the bottom of the scroll (e.g., in long-format BL 1, BL 12 + 14 and Dhṛp-G<sup>K</sup> and short-format BL 5B). The very top of a scroll is often left empty (for instance in long-format Dhṛp-G<sup>K</sup> and short-format BC 8), presumably to protect the inscribed part when the scroll was folded up. Within

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<sup>17</sup> Salomon 1999, 96 uses the scribal avoidance of join-reinforcing threads and sheet edges to argue against Brough 1962, 13 that the entire length of a long-format scroll was ready-made before a scribe commenced his work, and that the scribe either commissioned a complete scroll of the size he thought appropriate or chose from a variety of differently-sized ready-made scrolls. While the careful and regular construction of most scrolls does suggest professional manufacture on a large scale, the features of some scrolls, such as the lack of reinforcing threads and smaller sheets in the upper part of scrolls BL 9 and BL 13 and the changing direction of sheet overlap in scroll BL 1, still indicate a certain element of improvisation in their manufacture, whether by a specialized scroll maker or by a scribe.

<sup>18</sup> The same type of development occurred in Central Asian paper manuscripts where painted circles took the place of string holes in earlier palm-leaf manuscripts.



the text area, the scribe fills lines from right to left (the writing direction of the Kharoṣṭhī script) proceeding from the top of the recto to the bottom. If he wishes to continue his text on the verso of the scroll, he flips the scroll over vertically and begins to fill the verso from the same end (the innermost part of the folded-up scroll), proceeding from there back towards that end from which he started to fill the recto (the outermost part of the folded-up scroll). In one case (scroll BC 16), the scribe reached the end of the verso before he had completed his text, and proceeded to add two more lines in the right margin (with the feet of letters pointing towards the right edge of the scroll) and one more line in the top margin (with the feet pointing towards the top edge); the intended reading order of these three



**Fig. 6:** Three monks with scrolls (Taddei 1983, pl. IIb).

lines has not yet been determined, and it cannot be ruled out that more text was added to the lost left margin of the verso. In general, the horizontal orientation of lines is maintained quite accurately, but some of the more cursive hands (e.g., BL scribe 2 and the RS scribe) introduce a downward slant from the beginning (right side) to the end (left side) of the line. This slant is particularly distinct in short-format scrolls, presumably because they could be more easily rotated under writing than long-format scrolls.

In most Gandhāran scrolls, the text block is structured by punctuation marks and word spacing. The former typically occur at two different levels, with small dots indicating lower-level phrase units and larger circular designs indicating paragraph- or chapter-level divisions. Some scrolls (BL 9, BL 13, BL 28) additionally mark the end of a paragraph or chapter by placing a similar design in the right-hand margin of the manuscript between the margin thread and the edge of the surface (Baums 2009, 70, 105–106). For the same purpose, the Dhṛp-G<sup>K</sup> scribe placed a horizontal line of abstract geometric shapes under the end of each chapter, starting from the right edge of the text block or in the right margin, and extending between one quarter and one half of the width of the text block leftwards (cf. Brough 1962, pl. XV). Word spacing is used especially with verse texts, which are typically laid out so that the four quarters of a stanza fill one line and are separated by spaces (Falk 1993, 316–317; cf. Brough 1962, pl. I). Stanzas in verse texts and paragraphs in prose texts can also be numbered, with the number sign following the unit in question. The Dhṛp-G<sup>K</sup> scribe instead noted the number of verses in each chapter at its end (after the final punctuation mark or to the left of the horizontal line of abstract shapes). The very end of a text is sometimes marked with the lifelike drawing of a flower or a stūpa. In one special case (Figure 7), the flower occurs at the bottom of the recto of a scroll (BL 13), but the text actually continues on the verso with two more paragraphs. It is possible

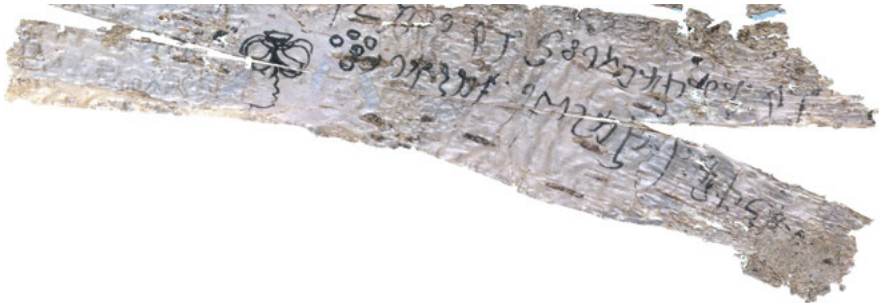


Fig. 7: End-of-text mark in scroll BL 13 (Baums 2009, pl. 21).

that the part on the verso represents a secondary extension of this text, consisting of a loosely joined sequence of explanations of a selection of Buddhist verses.

Where the end of a text is preserved it does not usually carry any additional information, such as a text title or the name of a scribe or owner. The ‘Split’ Collection does, however, include one scroll (SC 5) that preserves parts of two chapters from a *Prajñāpāramitā* and a detached fragment that appears to be from the bottom of a sheet and contains the following two lines (Falk 2011, 23, pl. 8):

paḍhamage postage prañaparamidae budhamitra ///

idraśavasa sadhaviharisa imeṇa ca kuśalamulena sarvasatvaṇa matrapitra ///

The first line specifies the content of this scroll as “the first book of the *Prajñāpāramitā* of Budhamitra,” referring either to the scribe or to the owner of the manuscript. After a stretch of lost text, the second line continues “dwelling together with Idraśrava” – probably a further specification of Budhamitra – and adds “by this root of good, for all beings, for mother and father” before breaking off.

This note on the *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript sheds light on the interpretation of another fragment of birch bark in the British Library collection (BL 3B) that appears to belong to the end of a text written by the same scribe as scrolls BL 7, BL 9, BL 13 and BL 18 (Salomon 1999, 40–42, Baums 2009, 609–611). The lines in question, which occur just above a partially preserved join and skip over a centered join-reinforcing thread, read as follows:

+++++++ /// [t]. a i di ṇavodaśa \*

+++++++ /// [ge] postag (\*e) gasa[e] pacaviśadi 20 4 1 saghaśravasa śamaṇasa

The first line ends with the number word ‘nineteen’ which probably refers either to the content or to the size of the preceding last chapter of the text. The second line appears to contain information about the text as a whole. It starts with an expression in the locative case containing the word ‘book’ modified by a lost attribute – probably a numeral as on scroll SC 5. The word *gasae* ‘verses’ is a feminine nominative plural and thus probably constitutes the subject of the statement, followed by the number word ‘twenty-five’ (repeated in number signs) that appears to be its attribute. This leaves an ambiguous reference to the monk Saghaśrava in the genitive singular: it could mark him as the composer of the verses or the commentary on them or, more likely, as the scribe or owner of the manuscript. The term ‘colophon’ has been used for the text-final statements on these fragments. They probably occupied the typical position of a colophon at the end of a text, and at least the text-final statement of the *Prajñāpāramitā* appears to share with

the later and more elaborate Gilgit colophons a reference to the beneficiaries of the merit that accrues from the production of the manuscript (von Hinüber 1980, 50).

The information on scroll fragment BL 3B is similar to that in the introductory line (possibly a verse) of scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup>:

budhavarṃsa śamaṇasa budhaṇadisardhavyarisa ida dharmapadaṣa postaka dharmasraveṇa likhida araṇi

Brough (1962, xx–xxii, 119, 177 (followed by Salomon 1999, 40–42)) read the third word from the end as *dharmuṇa* and took it as a reference to the place where the manuscript was copied, but the reproduction of this passage on his plate I rather supports my interpretation as a personal name formed on the same pattern as Idraśava in scroll SC 5 and Saghaśrava in scroll fragment BL 3B. The Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> line can then be unambiguously translated as: “This is the *Dharmapada* book of the monk Budhavarṃsa, dwelling together with Budhaṇadi; it has been written by Dharmasraṇa in the monastery.” In contrast to SC 5 and BL 3B, Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> thus clearly distinguishes between owner and scribe. The Dharmapada introductory verse differs from BL 3B in not providing a number of text units, a service that in general always follows the text or part of a text in question.

Neither the text-final statement on scroll fragment BL 3B nor the introductory statement on scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> occupy a position that would have allowed them to identify the content of the manuscript when it was folded up. Unless external means were used to identify folded-up scrolls (such as tags or containers with labels), the information would have to be provided on the only part of a scroll’s surface that is visible in its folded-up state: the very end of the verso (on the other side of the same sheet as the beginning of the recto). Unfortunately, this part is only preserved in scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup>, and no photographs have ever been published of the relevant portion of the manuscript (the verso of fragment O). Until this desideratum is filled and the end of the verso of Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> is examined for the possible presence of a line specifying the content of the scroll, we have at least one piece of circumstantial evidence in the address line of the private letter on scroll BC 15 (Strauch 2008, 127). The strip of bark bearing this address has become detached from the rest of the scroll, but the empty vertical space preceding and following the address shows that it was not directly adjacent to the body of the letter, and the surface structure and width of the strip suggest that its position was indeed at the very end of the verso so that it would have been visible on the outside of the

folded-up (and possibly sealed) letter.<sup>19</sup> This makes it likely that if the identification of a folded-up literary scroll was provided on the manuscript itself, then it would also have occurred at the very end of the verso.

Almost always, a single scribe was responsible for the writing of a text, but one exception exists in scroll LC which contains a single text, but where the recto was written by one scribe and the verso by another.<sup>20</sup> When a significant amount of free space remained on a scroll, either because it was only inscribed on the recto or because its text did not extend all the way to the bottom of the verso, a secondary text was sometimes added at a later point by a different scribe (Figure 3). Among the ten scrolls studied in this article, two different types of text combination can be observed. The first is represented by scroll BL 13, where what appears to be the final part of a multi-volume commentarial text occupies all of the recto and in its present form (see above) extends 24 cm down the verso. It is followed by a similar but distinct commentarial text that is written by another scribe. Here the intention was clearly to write a sequel to the text that already existed on the scroll. The second pattern is represented by scrolls BL 1, BL 12 + 14 and BL 16 + 25. In each of these, a Buddhist canonical text (two verse texts and one set of sūtras) is followed by a string of narrative sketches written in a very casual style by two different scribes. It has not been possible to determine any relationship of content between the primary texts of these scrolls and the narrative sketches, and here the unused writing surface appears to have been repurposed for a new task without reference to the text that the scroll already contained. In each of the cases of reuse discussed so far, representing the habits of three different scribes, the secondary text follows the primary text immediately, without any vertical space and sometimes even finishing the last line of the primary text. A different procedure can be observed in scroll BC 1, where a collection of canonical sūtras was evidently meant to occupy just the recto of the scroll, but where due to lack of space the very last line of the text had to be written at the top of the verso. A secondary magical text was then added to the verso of the manuscript, but in this case only after a long vertical gap that apparently corresponds to one sheet of the scroll (i.e., the secondary text appears to start on the second sheet of the verso). Yet another arrangement occurs in scroll BC 9, where a scholastic text is added on the verso of a scroll whose entire recto is occupied by a treatise on statecraft.

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**19** The surface structure of the strip containing the address line indicates that it was written on the verso of the scroll, and the width of the strip places it at the very end of the preserved part of the verso (Ingo Strauch, personal communication).

**20** This situation is comparable to the larger-scale collaboration of scribes on the Gilgit *Dīrghāgama* manuscript described in Melzer 2007, 68–77.

Summarizing these observations and surveying the known corpus of Gandhāran scrolls, the following patterns of scribal practice emerge:

1. Short texts such as letters (BC 15) and some stotras (BC 8 and BC 10) only required one side of a short-format scroll to write down.
2. Prestige literature such as Buddhist canonical texts (BL 1 and BL 12 + 14), but also the non-Buddhist treatise on statecraft (BC 9), tended to be written only on the recto of both short-format and long-format scrolls. Where the length of such a text exceeded the available space, it could in principle be continued on the rectos of further scrolls. No absolutely clear cases of such continuation scrolls for prestige literature have yet been found, and it is possible that the primary mode of transmission for this type of literature remained oral and that the available manuscripts of complete texts or the beginnings of texts served special purposes. On the other hand, BL 16 + 25 does appear to be a continuation scroll, and BL 1 (see note on Table 2) may be another example. An exception to the pattern is the work of the scribe of the Senior collection of manuscripts, who produced both single- and double-sided scrolls of extracts from canonical literature. Another exception is scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> which probably contained the entire text of the *Dharmapada* using both the recto and almost half of the verso. Both of these exceptions date from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE (the Senior scrolls certainly, scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> probably) and are thus approximately one hundred years younger than the other known manuscripts of canonical texts. It is possible, but remains speculative, that they represent further developments in two different directions: a greater reliance on written transmission on one hand, and an increased emphasis on ritual uses of manuscripts on the other.
3. New literature including commentaries on canonical texts (BL 9, BL 13 and BL 18), other scholastic treatises (BL 28), Mahāyāna sūtras (BC 2) and stotras (BL 5B), as well as casual texts such as story sketches (BL 2), could be written on both sides of a scroll where needed and were demonstrably continued on further scrolls when both sides of the initial scroll were filled (BL 9, BL 13 and BL 18).
4. In addition, some forms of new literature (the scholastic treatise on BC 9) and casual texts (the story sketches of the British Library Collection) would reuse empty space on other manuscripts, and at least in the latter case without reference to the original content of the scroll. One related property shared by some new literature (BL 13) and casual texts (BL 4) is that a scribe could add additional material to another scribe's text (which is a different practice from that in scroll LC, where a single preexisting text was divided between two scribes to share labor or merit).



While the tendency for canonical texts to occur in partial manuscripts (especially the beginnings of texts) indicates the continuation of a strong oral transmission, the commentarial and scholastic literature shows clear signs of written transmission in addition to oral features. The commentary in scrolls BL 7, BL 9, BL 13 and BL 18, for instance, contains misspellings based on the shape of Kharoṣṭhi letters (such as the gotra name *paracariya* ← *\*parayaria* for *\*paraśaria*, and the technical term *driṭhiśari* for *\*driṭhiyari*; Baums 2009, 150, 326) besides representations of dialect features (such as *ṭida* instead of Gāndhāri *ṭhida*) that suggest that both a written source and reading aloud or recitation played a role in the production of the manuscript. The *Sanḡitisūtra* commentary in scroll BL 15 contains another clear example of written transmission in the section on the six *vivaḍamula*, where part of the text has been omitted because the eye of a copyist or somebody reading aloud skipped from the word *driṭhi* in one line of a source manuscript to the same word in the next line.

A feature of the casual story sketches may also indicate the production of one manuscript on the basis of another. Nine places on five different scrolls where these sketches occur have interlinear notes stating *likhidago* ‘it has been written,’ *likhidage aca avadane* ‘this avadāna has been written’ or variants thereof. In his detailed discussion of these notes, Salomon 1999, 71–76 observed that they were in another hand than the story sketches themselves, and he suggested that they either represent the certification of a supervisor that the manuscript had been produced correctly, or – more likely in view of the casual nature of the text – that another scribe who had made copies from the manuscripts we have noted this fact in his exemplars. Lenz 2003, 108–110 argued for a variant of Salomon’s rejected hypothesis in which the notations were added not by a supervisor of manuscript production, but by a teacher in a classroom setting to confirm that his students had written down their story sketches correctly. Revisiting the issue, Lenz 2010, 21–22 suggests instead that the notations may well have been written by the same scribe as the story sketches themselves, but did not provide a reason why the scribe should have annotated his own text in this way. Provisionally accepting Lenz’s suggestion, Mark Allon proposes in personal communication one possible explanation that attractively links the *likhidago* notes with the frequent injunction *vistare yaṣayupamano siyadi* ‘it shall be expanded according to model’ at the end of individual sketches (Lenz 2003, 85–91) and which also explains their extreme succinctness and casual style: the story sketches may be neither classroom exercises nor the memory aids of a storyteller, but rather instructions for the production of another manuscript in which the stories are told in full, and the author of the sketches would have noted the completion of the full stories by himself or by another scribe on his instruction sheet. While much unclarity thus remains about the purpose of the *likhidago* notation, two of these three explana-

tions (by Salomon and Allon) involve hypotheses about manuscript production in early Gandhāra that could be confirmed by new manuscript discoveries (either of a direct copy of one of the sketches, or of a collection of full stories based on the sketches).

## 5 Use and disposal

Beyond the scrolls themselves and the little that is known about their archaeological context, the only evidence for how they were used is provided by depictions in Gandhāran art (collected in Salomon 1999, 103–104). The one most relevant for the monastic context of our scrolls is a relief described by Taddei 1983, 338, showing three monks seated around a table with open scrolls in their hands (Figure 6). One of the monks joins the fingers of his right hand in a gesture that, as Taddei suggests, may indicate that a debate (presumably about the content of the scrolls)



**Fig. 8:** Mustachioed man with scroll (Rahman 1993, pl. XLIIa)

is underway. Another relief, from Shnaisha Gumbat in Swat (Rahman 1993, 95), shows a mustachioed man seated under a tree, holding an open scroll in both hands from which he reads while two young men listen attentively (Figure 8). Rahman interprets the scene as “a government functionary reading out instructions,” and while one may disagree with the specifics, here we do seem to witness the use of a Gandhāran scroll outside the monastic context. A third depiction of scroll use is found on another relief from Swat that is now kept in the British Museum (Tissot 1985, 109, Kurita 1988–90, II fig. 859, Zwalf 1996, I 232). It shows a seated man with partially shaved head or close-fitting cap, holding an open scroll in his left hand while looking up at a stooping woman approaching him with a box-shaped object in her arms (Figure 9). This scene has received a wide range of differing interpretations – a poet and his muse (imitating Greek models), the schooling of the Bodhisattva or a scene from the *Mahāummaggajātaka* involving a young minister and a handmaiden – and pending new evidence it seems wisest not to draw conclusions from any of these possibilities. Considering the ambiguous hairstyle of the man holding the scroll, both a monastic and a non-monastic context seem possible.

Returning to our documents, we first observe that a large number of horizontal creases occurs in the bark of both short-format and long-format scrolls, and that often these creases have led to breaks separating the bark into horizontal strips. The distance between creases, and thus the height of strips into which the bark has broken, increases regularly from the bottom of a scroll to the top. In the long-format scroll BL 9, for instance, the next-to-bottommost strip is 1.7 cm high, whereas the next-to-topmost preserved strip measures 4.2 cm in height. This indicates that the scrolls were folded up from the bottom to the top, and was confirmed during the opening of the scrolls in modern times. Textual study combined with the observation of their opening showed that the scrolls were folded up so that the recto faced the inside, a procedure that offered the best protection for the textual content on the recto and the upper part of the verso.<sup>21</sup> This puts to rest various earlier theories about the Khotan *Dharmapada* scroll, in particular the idea that it was folded up concertina-style, whose proponents mistakenly considered a scroll with roller (not used in Gandhāra; section 3) the only probable type.<sup>22</sup> In one case (scroll BL 13), a horizontal crack caused by the par-

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<sup>21</sup> One apparent exception (scroll BL 21) was found folded up with its recto facing the outside, but this seems to be a case of casually folding a worn-out scroll for disposal (Salomon 1999, 50–51).

<sup>22</sup> “Une fois écrits, [les feuillets] étaient repliés sur eux-mêmes de façon à se présenter sous l’aspect de cahiers de 20 centimètres de long sur un hauteur de 4 centimètres et demi à 5 centimètres” (Senart 1898, 199); “[m]ost probably it was never intended that the manuscript should



**Fig. 9:** Man with scroll and woman (Tissot 1985, fig. 257).

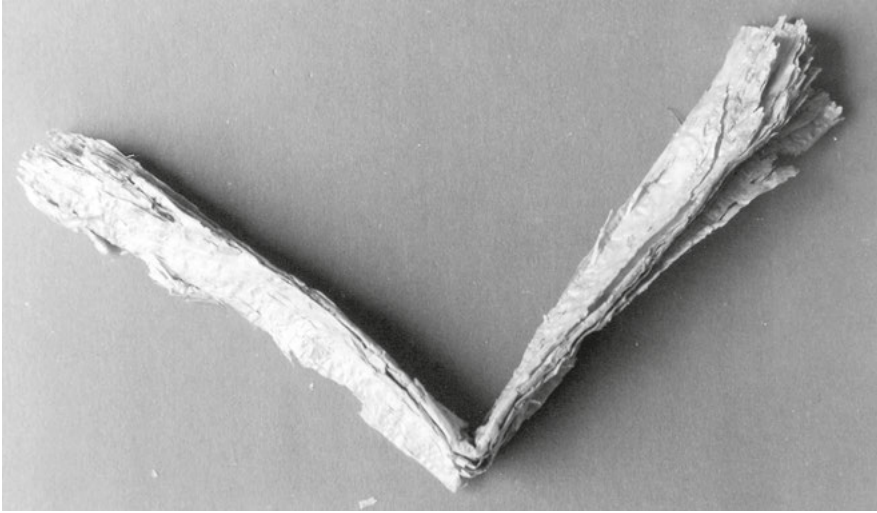
ticularly tight folding at the bottom of the scroll was repaired using three small strips of differently-colored birch bark (measuring  $0.2 \times 0.5$  cm,  $0.2 \times 0.6$  cm and  $0.2 \times 0.6$  cm respectively) that have been glued over the crack in the same way that we would use adhesive tape (Figure 7).

Once they were vertically folded into a tight, flat package, the short-format scrolls were additionally folded in half horizontally. In some cases (e.g., scrolls BC 8 and RS 24) this fold could be observed directly when the scrolls were found (Khan/Khan 2004, 12, Lenz 2003, 4; Figure 10), and in their current open arrangement it can take the form of a vertical crease (less crisp than the horizontal ones) running down the middle of the scroll or of an outright break caused during modern opening. In other cases, the material along this crease had disintegrated completely before the scrolls were deposited or in the centuries until their rediscovery. It is not immediately apparent why the short-format scrolls would be subjected to this additional folding since it does not make them significantly easier to store or deposit and subjects the material to additional stress. I note for now that the only known non-literary scroll (the letter BC 15) also appears to have been

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be rolled up; possibly it was to be hung on a wall" (Kaye 1927, 10); "[t]he present appearance of some of the parts suggests that it was of the concertina-type, though it is possible that it was originally intended to be a roll" (Brough 1962, 12).

folded in this way since a noticeable crease runs down the middle of the sheet and the outermost strip has broken in half, and will discuss this question further in section 6. In contrast, none of the long-format scrolls in our sample have been folded horizontally, presumably because the greater height of these scrolls and consequently the greater thickness of the vertically folded-up package made an additional horizontal folding difficult or impossible (cf. Salomon 1999, pl. 6).



**Fig. 10:** Short-format Gandhāran scroll, folded up (Khan/Khan 2004, fig. 5).

Two of the short-format scrolls in the Bajaur collection (the letter BC 15 and the stotra BC 10) have a hole, two or three millimeters in diameter, near the middle of the right half of each bark strip. When these scrolls were folded up vertically the holes would line up, and it therefore seems likely that they were caused by piercing the scroll while it was folded-up vertically but not folded in half horizontally. In the case of the letter, a string bearing a seal could have passed through it (Ingo Strauch, personal communication), but it is not clear why the stotra scroll should have received the same treatment.

The users of Gandhāran scrolls would sometimes annotate the text of their scrolls, but a meaningful discussion of this phenomenon will have to wait until more texts have been edited and until palaeographic study makes it easier to distinguish the hand of a user of a manuscript from that of its scribe. The reader is referred to the discussion of the *likhidago* annotations in section 4 and will note that even in this well-documented case the identity of the annotator remains

uncertain. A possible customization of a manuscript by its user, but just as likely a feature provided by the scribe, are the margin marks indicating subsections of a text (also discussed in section 4).

The information available about the day-to-day use of Gandhāran birch-bark scrolls is thus rather limited, and so is our knowledge about the details of and motivations behind the disposals that preserved some of these scrolls for posterity (section 2). Because none of the manuscript discoveries were made in the course of archeological excavation, information about their disposal is only available for three collections: the BL collection, the RS collection and the BC collection. In his discussion of the first of these, Salomon 1999, 69–86 suggested that the deposit of the BL scrolls is parallel to the Jewish custom of depositing worn-out manuscripts (rather than destroying them) out of respect for their religious status. His argument was based on the observation that many of the BL scrolls appear to have been damaged and incomplete before their deposit. It is difficult to estimate how much of the disintegration of birch bark is due to handling in antiquity rather than environmental circumstances in the centuries that passed, but their used status is borne out by the fact that one of them (BL 21) was casually folded up inside out, and that in two cases (BL 3 and BL 5) parts of several unrelated scrolls were folded up together. When the RS collection was discovered, it soon became apparent that it differs from the BL collection in three important respects: all of its manuscripts are written by the same scribe; they are in an excellent state of preservation and were possibly unused when deposited; and they were discovered inside a pot with an inscription that in all respects (short of using a word for ‘relic’) conforms to the usual formula for relic establishments (Salomon 2003). On the basis of these facts, Salomon 2009 argues that the scrolls of the RS collection were custom-made for the purpose of ritual installation as dharma relic, and that such an installation was successfully carried out, while maintaining and refining his position that the BL collection represents a ritual burial of worn-out texts. He supports his argument with new archeological data reported in Tarzi 2005 for Buddhist monastic sites around Hadda in Afghanistan. These finds revealed two relevant patterns of use for clay pots such as the ones that contained the BL and RS scrolls: on one hand, they were used as funerary urns and buried outside the western and southern walls of a monastery; on the other, they were used as outer containers for reliquaries and placed within small stone chambers in stūpas.

While in the light of all available evidence, it does seem likely that the Senior scrolls constitute a dharma-relic deposit, whether or not they saw prior use, the case is less clear for the BL scrolls. Their container does not carry any reference to the purpose of the deposit, and the fact that similar containers were used for human burials at Hadda does not necessarily mean that the disposal of these worn-out scrolls was also conceptualized as a burial. We will be right in regard-



ing it as a respectful disposal, whether intended to be permanent or temporary, but lack the data to deduce much beyond this main fact.<sup>23</sup> Coming to the third major deposit of Gandhāran scrolls, the Bajaur collection, we cannot even be sure whether these manuscripts were in fact deposited in a formal sense. They were reported to have been found in a small stone chamber or box resembling the one that at Hadda contained a clay pot with reliquary, and on this basis Salomon 2009, 28–29 suggested that they like the RS scrolls might represent dharma relics. On the other hand, no pot or other object related to relic establishments were reported in connection with the Bajaur material; in contrast to the RS collection it contains a variety of textual genres on scrolls that do show signs of handling and use; and in contrast to both the BL and the RS collection, the Bajaur collection contains one clearly non-Buddhist text (the letter BC 15).<sup>24</sup> While we cannot rule out that this one unrelated text slipped into a dharma-relic establishment by accident, the overall picture remains as inconclusive as with the BL collection, and we cannot rule out either that the Bajaur collection was simply part of a monastic library, either in its regular place of storage or hidden away, that was left behind when the monastery was abandoned (Strauch 2008, 104–105).<sup>25</sup>

## 6 Origin and survival

Discussions of the origin of the Gandhāran scroll format (most recently Jäger 2006, 189) have been almost entirely restricted to comparisons with Greek and Chinese scrolls, but the connection of either of these two traditions with Gandhāra faces serious historical problems. While we have direct documentary evidence for a flourishing use of Gandhāran scrolls in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE and possibly also in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, the existence of two Gandhāran sites with Aśokan inscrip-

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**23** A cautionary tale is presented by the private letters from Hermopolis discussed below: they were found in a sealed jar in a necropolis for the ibis bird, among thousands of other jars containing ibis mummies, and no rationale for this kind of disposal of secular and ephemeral documents is apparent (Kraeling 1953, 18, Bresciani/Kamil 1966, Fitzmyer 1981, 29).

**24** The treatise on statecraft (BC 9) is also not a Buddhist text, but in this case the secondary text on the scroll – a Buddhist scholastic treatise – would have warranted its inclusion in a dharma-relic deposit.

**25** In principle, other types of ritual deposit than burial and relic establishment also need to be taken into consideration, as illustrated by a recent discovery in Bamiyan. In the course of conservation work on the remains of the eastern giant Buddha statue, twenty small manuscript fragments were found that had been deposited in a metal container inside the statue. They contain part of the *pratītyasamutpāda* formula and provide first evidence from South Asia for the custom of depositing manuscripts in statues (Matsuda 2009, 8).

tions using the local script Kharoṣṭhī – whereas Aśoka's inscriptions in the rest of South Asia use Brāhmī (von Hinüber 1990, 55) – indicates that a local Gandhāran manuscript tradition existed already in the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. At this point in time, Greek colonies had been established in Bactria, but another century would pass before Gandhāra was fully incorporated into the Greek sphere of influence, and direct contacts between Gandhāra and China are even less likely at this early date.

Also in terms of format, Greek and Chinese scrolls differ markedly from the two Gandhāran formats in that they are written and read in horizontal orientation, with vertical lines progressing from right to left in the Chinese case and horizontal lines arranged in columns in the Greek case. If either of them had served as model for the Gandhāran scrolls, it would be hard to explain why the latter should have undergone such a radical change in format. Previous discussions of Gandhāran scrolls and their origin also suffered from an excessive focus on the long-format type. This was initially due to the fact that scroll Dhṛp-G<sup>K</sup> was the only available specimen, but even after the discovery of the BL collection, the impression that the long format was more widely used and characteristic for the tradition persisted (Salomon 1999, 98). The picture changed radically with the RS collection which consists almost entirely of short-format scrolls, and with the Bajaur collection which consists in equal parts of short- and long-format scrolls, and as argued in footnote 5 even the BL collection contains more examples of the short format than was apparent. This new-found preponderance of short-format scrolls further weakens any connection with the Greek and Chinese scroll traditions, and it suggests that the short-format scrolls played a more central role in the development of the Gandhāran tradition than previously thought.

A complete reevaluation of the origin of the Gandhāran scroll format is thus needed, and the first question is whether any other ancient manuscript culture was in contact with Gandhāra and could have been instrumental in the development of the Gandhāran tradition. The most obvious candidate is the Achaemenid empire which ruled Gandhāra from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. It has long been agreed that Kharoṣṭhī – the writing system used in Gandhāran inscriptions and manuscripts – is a derivative of the Aramaic script used in the administration of the Achaemenid empire (von Hinüber 1990, 55, Falk 1993, 92–99), and if the Aramaic scribal tradition provided the graphical raw material for Gandhāran manuscript culture, then its influence may very well also have extended to the physical support of texts – the format, construction and use of manuscripts – and it is surprising that this possibility has so far received no discussion at all.

Our earliest evidence for Aramaic scribal practice are Assyrian bas-reliefs of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, depicting the recording of plunder (Dougherty 1928, 129–133, Hyatt 1943, 73, Lemaire 1985, 119; Figure 11). These records were kept in

duplicate, on clay tablets in cuneiform script and on parchment or papyrus manuscripts in Aramaic script. In these reliefs, the Aramaic scribe is shown standing up, with a pen in one hand and a flexible sheet or scroll, curling up at the bottom, in his other hand. Lemaire 1985, 119–122 collects the evidence for the material of Aramaic manuscripts and suggests that leather was used where special durability was called for (e.g., in the Achaemenid royal archives, and thus in the records of plunder), but that papyrus – where available – was the more common writing material for other purposes (including letters and private contracts).<sup>26</sup>



**Fig. 11:** Aramaic scribe with scroll in Assyrian relief (Hyatt 1943, fig. 5).

Documentary evidence for the Achaemenid Aramaic scribal tradition is available from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. The total known corpus includes about 150 documents and consists of the following major manuscript deposits:

1. Approximately one hundred contracts, letters and other documents on papyrus from the archive of a Jewish military colony in Elephantine at the southern border of Egypt. The bulk of these was published in Sayce 1906, Sachau 1911 and Cowley 1923; Kraeling 1953 added seventeen documents.

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<sup>26</sup> Haran 1982 similarly argues that papyrus was the common writing material in Israel until about the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, when the beginning canonization of Biblical literature in the Second Temple period led to the preferred use of parchment for scriptural texts. Hicks 1983 acknowledges the existence of both papyrus and parchment manuscripts in early Israel, but suggests the texts that came to constitute the Old Testament may have been written on parchment from the beginning.

2. Five private letters on papyrus sent from northern Egypt to Hermopolis in central Egypt, where they were discovered inside a jar in a necropolis for the ibis bird (Bresciani/Kamil 1966).
3. Thirteen letters on parchment sent by Arsham, the satrap of Egypt, from Susa to his local governor (Driver 1954).
4. Thirty official letters, lists of provisions and records of debt, probably from the archive of the satrap of Bactria, written on parchment, and all but one dating to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE (Shaked 2004, Naveh/Shaked 2012).

Within the Achaemenid empire, letters such as those of the satrap Arsham were conveyed over great distances by a postal system of highways, horses and relay stations that was subsequently adopted by Alexander the Great (Westermann 1928, 375–376). In the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Alexander's general Nearchus reported that in Gandhāra letters were written on tightly-woven pieces of cloth (ἐν σινδόσι λίαν κεκροτημέναις; Janert 1955/56, 53–55, Falk 1993, 290), and it is likely that he referred to Aramaic letters used by the Achaemenid bureaucracy in Gandhāra (von Hinüber 1990, 20–21), even though cloth is not attested among the Aramaic finds from Bactria, Persia and Egypt. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, the Aśokan inscriptions in Aramaic (Boyce/Grenet 1991, 131–149) attest to the continued use of this language and script in Gandhāra.

Detailed studies of the Aramaic documents from Egypt and Persia have been carried out by Bezalel Porten (especially Porten 1979 and 1980), and the following overview of Aramaic scroll construction and use is based on his findings. The recent publication of the Bactrian archive has confirmed the results set out below.

At least in those parts of the Achaemenid empire where papyrus rolls were available, the Aramaic tradition also distinguished between a long format (horizontal scrolls filled in columns and used for literary works and long lists) and a short format (for letters, contracts and shorter accounts; Porten 1980, 41). Depending on the importance of the short-format documents and on the available raw materials, they could be produced from more durable parchment or less durable papyrus (and, according to Nearchus, also from cloth). In the case of papyrus, the starting point for both scroll formats were long rolls of about 40 cm in width that had themselves been glued together from sheets in such a way that on the recto the papyrus fibers were perpendicular to the joins, while on the verso they were parallel to the joins. The orientation of the horizontal long-format scrolls was accordingly such that the lines of writing followed the direction of the fibers (and were perpendicular to the joins) on the recto, but in the short-format scrolls the lines of writing are perpendicular to the fibers (and parallel to the joins) on the recto. This indicates that in the production, inscribing and use of short-format

Aramaic documents the orientation of the writing material was vertical (Porten 1979, 80), and confirms the visual evidence of the Assyrian reliefs.

Based on an examination of more than 30 Aramaic short-format documents, Porten 1979, 78–79, 92 distinguishes three different types of width among papyrus scrolls – a small size of 25–26 cm, a medium size of 27–28 cm and a large size of 30–32 cm<sup>27</sup> – as well as a typical width of 30–32 cm among parchment letters. The width range of Aramaic short-format scrolls thus overlaps with that of the Gandhāran short-format scrolls studied in this article (ca. 20 cm to 27 cm), but not with that of the Gandhāran long-format scrolls (14 cm to ca. 15.5 cm). Porten does not provide an account of the heights of his documents, but the photographs published in the editions of Aramaic documents show that their height varied as much as that of the Gandhāran short-format scrolls, from a slightly-wider-than-high aspect ratio (like in scroll RS 19) to scrolls that are considerably higher than they are wide (like BL 5B), depending on the space requirements of their content (Porten 1979, 92).

Aramaic papyrus scrolls (and presumably also parchment scrolls) were inscribed with a black ink made from carbon mixed with a thin gum solution, using a reed brush (specimens of which have been found) as writing instrument (Porten 1979, 76, 79–80). While some uncertainty remains about the exact composition of Gandhāran ink and while no original pens have yet been discovered in Gandhāra, the basic tools of the two scribal traditions thus agree in general outline. When an Aramaic scribe needed to correct a mistake he blotted it out using a piece of cloth or his finger (Haran 1982, 168–169), another habit that he shared with his Gandhāran counterparts (see section 4).

The extent to which the Aramaic writing material was filled with text, and the way in which the text was laid out, depended both on the type of text and the nature of the material. Letters on parchment and contracts on parchment or papyrus were inscribed on the recto only (Porten 1979, 88–90, 92). In the case of parchment, this was due to the coarse surface of the verso which made it unsuitable for writing. The motivation for writing contracts on one side only is less clear, but it is likely that the physical protection of the content was more important in this type of text than in others. When a scroll was inscribed on both sides, the scribe would flip it over vertically in reaching the bottom of the recto, and continue inscribing the verso from the same end of the scroll (Porten 1980, 42), in just the same way as the early Gandhāran scribes. The text area of Aramaic short-format documents starts one or two centimeters from the right edge of the scroll, and lines run as close to the left margin as their content allowed, corresponding

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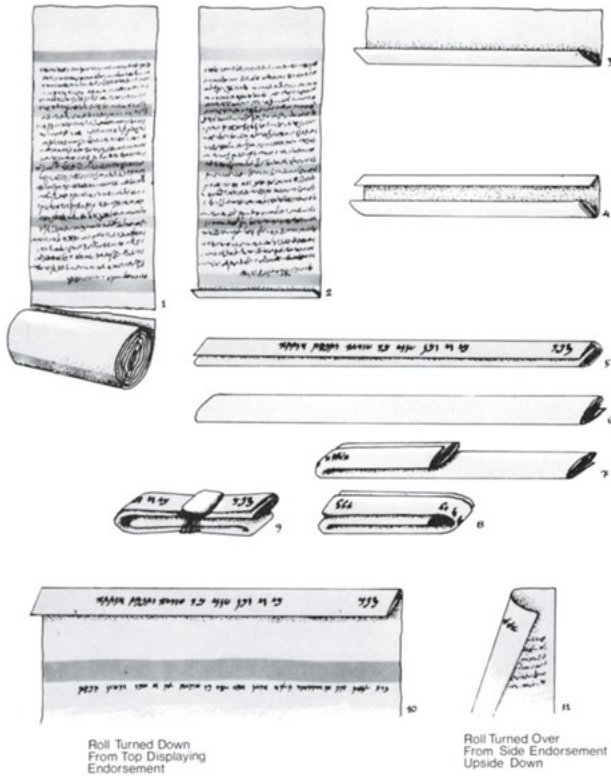
27 Porten 1980, 39–40 operates with two standard widths of 27 cm and 32 cm instead.

exactly to the Gandhāran practice. The top sheet (approximately 15–20 cm) of a contract scroll was usually left empty (Porten 1979, 81), presumably again for the protection of the content of the scroll when it was folded up, a practice that we also observed in the Gandhāran long-format scroll Dhp-G<sup>K</sup> and in the short-format scroll BC 8. When an Aramaic scribe ran out of writing surface before he could complete his text, he would turn the sheet clockwise and continue writing in the right margin (Porten 1979, 92), in the same fashion that the scribe of Gandhāran scroll BC 16 continued his text in the right (and top) margin when he had reached the end of his verso. The endorsement of an Aramaic contract and the recipient address of an Aramaic letter were written at the very bottom of the verso so that they would be visible when the scroll was folded up (Porten 1979, 80–81). As shown in section 4, there are strong indications that the recipient address on scroll BC 15 also occupied this position, providing yet another parallelism between Aramaic and early Gandhāran scribal practice.

For storage or transportation, Aramaic short-format documents would be folded up vertically from the bottom to the top of the scroll, in such a way that the recto faced the inside (Porten 1979, 80–81). When the scroll had been folded up all the way into a compact strip, one of several forms of horizontal folding would be applied, depending on the type of document: contracts were folded in thirds, while letters were folded either in half, or first in half and then in quarters (Porten 1979, 88–90; Figure 12). The primary vertical folding of Aramaic short-format documents thus corresponds precisely to the folding of both short-format and long-format scrolls in early Gandhāra, and one of the two variants of horizontal folding of Aramaic letters corresponds to the horizontal folding of Gandhāran short-format scrolls.

In view of this long list of detailed agreements in the way that short-format documents were prepared, inscribed and used in the Achaemenid empire and in early Gandhāra, and on the historical background of the Achaemenid administration of Gandhāra at the time when the Aramaic script was first adapted to the writing of the Gāndhārī language, I therefore suggest that Aramaic manuscript formats and scribal habits as practised in the Achaemenid empire likewise formed the starting point for the Gandhāran manuscript tradition. The immediate point of contact between the two traditions is provided by their short-format documents, and also historically it seems likely that the inhabitants of Gandhāra under Achaemenid administration primarily (or even exclusively) observed the use of Aramaic manuscripts and writing in the form of documents regulating their everyday affairs. When they made this new cultural technique their own, evidently also applying it to legal and administrative purposes, the first innovation consisted in the use of the locally available writing material birch bark. The long strips of bark harvested from trees replaced the strips of parchment and rolls





Ada Yardeni

Fig. 12: Inscripting and folding of an Aramaic contract scroll (Porten 1979, 79).

of papyrus, and vertical margin threads were introduced to compensate for the greater fragility of birch bark, but in all other respects the preparation and use of short-format documents remained the same that it had been in the Aramaic tradition.

When manuscripts started being used for the transmission and ritual handling of Buddhist (and non-Buddhist) literature, the need for a separate long format arose. But as noted above, the Aramaic long format was probably never very familiar in Gandhāra and presumably disappeared completely as a possible model with the collapse of the Achaemenid empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The corresponding Greek long-format type may have been used in the Greek colonies in Bactria around the same time, but the cultural influence of these Greek colonies did not permeate Gandhāra until the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, and thus the Greek scroll also appears to have been unavailable as a model for the development of the Gandhāran long-format type. Because of the unavailability

of these external models, the development of the Gandhāran long-format scroll proceeded as a simple vertical extension of the short-format type as described in detail above, but possibly inspired by the observation that Aramaic short-format scrolls on papyrus were cut from rolls that were originally glued together from sheets. If this scenario is accepted, then it suggests that the development of the Gandhāran long-format scroll occurred between the end of Achaemenid rule and the beginning of strong Greek influence in Gandhāra, at some point of time between 300 and 150 BCE.

The evidence thus indicates that birch-bark scrolls in two different formats constituted the primary manuscript type of Gandhāra for approximately five hundred years, until they fell out of use and were replaced by the pan-South-Asian writing material palm leaf and its narrow horizontal format. The almost complete disappearance of the scroll format appears to have gone hand in hand with the replacement of Gandhārī as a literary language by Sanskrit, and both processes are clearly illustrated by the 2<sup>nd</sup>- to 4<sup>th</sup>-century CE Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts found at Bamiyan and in Xinjiang (see Table 1) which are not only exclusively written on palm leaf but show a high degree of Sanskritization. The later use of birch bark for other manuscript types falls outside the scope of this article, but it is interesting to note that we can distinguish three cycles of the introduction and adaptation of manuscript traditions in Gandhāra and the surrounding areas:

1. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Gandhāra comes under the influence of the Achaemenid empire and is introduced to the Aramaic administrative manuscript tradition. It adapts both the writing system and the writing material of this tradition to the local language and to a locally available raw material.
2. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, Gandhāra comes into closer contact with the manuscript traditions of mainland South Asia, using the Brāhmī script and palm leaf as writing material. The local script and literary language are given up, and birch-bark manuscripts imitating the palm-leaf format become the general manuscript type of Gandhāra (Sander 1968, 24, 27–29).
3. In the late 1<sup>st</sup> millennium CE, Gandhāran Buddhist manuscript culture gradually disappears. Western paper formats and the codex are introduced to the region, but in Kashmir birch bark continues to be used for the production of manuscript codices, until paper is adopted as the general writing material under Mughal influence in the 17<sup>th</sup> century CE (Bühler 1877, 29–30).

The Gandhāran scroll format survived in niche applications for amulets and ritual purposes (Gough 1878, 17–18, Bühler 1896, 88, Janert 1955/56, 71–72, Losty 1982, 9). The earliest example for this practice appears to be part of the same manuscript deposit as the rest of the BL collection (Salomon 1999, 46). The scroll in question (BL 6) is exceptionally narrow (5.5 cm) and made from a single piece

of bark. In contrast to all other known Gandhāran scrolls it is written in Brāhmī. It appears to contain a Buddhist sūtra comparing the human body to a city (not a medical text as initially reported). A very similar narrow paper scroll, measuring 6.4 cm in width and containing a collection of sūtras and magical formulas, was found in Shorchuk on the Northern Silk Road (Waldschmidt 1959). At the other end of the spectrum in terms of size and chronology, we find large illustrated scrolls to be carried in procession, such as the twenty-meter-long cloth scroll containing a Devanagari text of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* illustrated in Gaur 1972, 160. In all of these later scrolls the general parameters of text layout and the direction of folding or rolling remained the same as in the early Gandhāran scroll types.

Further research is needed on the historical relationship between the Gandhāran birch-bark scroll format and the thin sheets of gold, silver and copper that often accompanied contemporary Buddhist relic deposits, recording their donor and beneficiaries and sometimes quoting from canonical literature (Baums 2012). These metal sheets are typically much wider than high and rolled up horizontally, but some resemble the short-format birch-bark scrolls in their dimensions, and the Senavarma gold sheet (Baums 2012, no. 24) shows signs of having been folded in thirds horizontally (like the Aramaic contract scrolls, but without prior vertical folding). Janert 1955/56, 42 independently suggested that the metal sheets might imitate pieces of birch bark folded up and deposited in reliquaries, and several reports of birch-bark “twists” found in reliquaries but now lost (summarized in Salomon 1999, 59–61) may refer to these prototypes for the metal sheets. Two recently-found copper books – consisting, respectively, of five and eight plates that have the general shape and size of birch-bark sheets and are linked to each other by metal rings – may similarly represent metal imitations of long-format birch-bark scrolls, and the recent edition of the shorter of these books (Falk 2014) reveals a relic-donation formula expanded by numerous scriptural quotations, similar to the text on the Senavarma gold sheet. A full edition of the other copper book remains an urgent desideratum, but it seems increasingly likely that the legendary reports of Buddhist canonical texts engraved on copper and interred in stūpas – most notably by the Chinese pilgrim Xuánzàng (7<sup>th</sup> century CE) in reference to the Buddhist council under Kaniṣka (Bühler 1896, 90, Janert 1955/56, 43, Falk 1993, 309) – are rooted in a memory of such long, literary relic inscriptions on copper imitations of long-format birch-bark scrolls.

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Gudrun Melzer

# A Palaeographic Study of a Buddhist Manuscript from the Gilgit Region

## A Glimpse into a Scribes' Workshop

### 1 Introduction

About twelve years ago, a fairly well preserved, voluminous birch-bark manuscript<sup>1</sup> was sold on the antiquities market to collectors in Japan, Norway, and the United States (Figures 1–2).<sup>2</sup> It contains the canonical Sanskrit text of the long discourses of the Buddha, the *Dirghāgama* of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda tradition, one of the most influential schools of non-Mahāyāna Buddhism. The manuscript can be dated to the latter half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century or slightly later. Several of the texts in the manuscript show numerous scribal errors that, in places, make these texts nearly incomprehensible. Since the manuscript is only incompletely preserved and is the only surviving copy of these texts, an editor today who wishes to make them accessible for a wider audience will quite naturally begin to resent the responsible scribes. But presumably a Buddhist reader of the 8<sup>th</sup> century – even if generally familiar with the content of these texts – would also have had difficulties due to the many misspellings and omissions in some parts of the manuscript.<sup>3</sup> In fact, one wonders what the purpose of such a manuscript might have been. It is possible that it was not intended to be actually used, to be read and

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<sup>1</sup> The first part of the manuscript up to folio 266 is preserved merely in fragments. A few folios (e.g., 289 and 290) are still stuck together, and as yet their contents cannot be accessed. The last folio is numbered 454. More than half of the manuscript is presently accessible in the form of digital images of good quality.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the leaves are in a private collection in Virginia (USA). Folios 330–363 and 367–384 belong to the Hirayama collection in Kamakura (Japan), folios 364–366 are owned by Bukkyō University in Kyōto (Japan) and a few fragments are part of the Martin Schøyen collection in Oslo (Norway). Three small fragments from the *Govindasūtra* were offered for sale in 2005 by Isao Kurita (Tōkyō). On the manuscript in general, see Hartmann 2000, 2002a, 2004a, 2014, as well as Melzer 2010, 1–10.

<sup>3</sup> Also present-day readers are often well equipped: with large digital collections of texts of the same school or of related traditions in Sanskrit and Pali, as well as with translations into Tibetan or Chinese that are easily searchable, together with a network of specialised scholar friends always eager to give helpful suggestions. At this point, I would like to thank Jan-Ulrich Sobisch for inviting me to the Copenhagen Workshop on manuscriptology in 2007 and the participants for their suggestions. I am also grateful to Lore Sander, who read the draft of this article and

studied, but was rather produced for a library as part of a complete set of the Buddhist scriptures regarded at that time as canonical or fundamental. Another possibility, although less likely, is that it was copied to keep in a *stūpa*, as the word of the Buddha, where it would have remained unseen and untouched. But the situation is complicated further by the fact that although the manuscript was written so carelessly with regard to its contents, the general layout of the pages was done with care and the script is appealing. For this reason, a detailed palaeographical analysis of the manuscript was undertaken. This analysis yielded rewarding results. It seems that a considerable number of the flaws were not copied from the earlier original manuscripts, but possibly occurred only in the course of writing this manuscript due to the way the scribes worked. Indeed, from studying this manuscript, it became evident that the impact of individual scribes on canonical Buddhist texts should not be underestimated.

After a brief introduction about the manuscript and its errors, the individual characteristics of the scribes and their working methods will be discussed, as well as some palaeographic peculiarities typical for manuscripts of this period. In the long tradition of copying Buddhist manuscripts, it is clear that also other factors most likely led to the present condition of the text. These must also be searched for, such as special characteristics in the language, which underwent changes over the centuries.

## 2 The manuscript of the *Dīrghāgama* of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādins

Only two complete versions of text collections of the long Buddha discourses are thus far known, one in Pali and one in Chinese. These other complete versions belong to other Buddhist schools (Theravāda and Dharmaguptaka, respectively) and differ in many respects from the newly discovered manuscript. Although some texts are common to all three collections, the exact wording is different from one version to another, and therefore it is not possible to rely on parallel passages to fill gaps, as for example where our manuscript is damaged. There are also a few texts in the newly discovered manuscript that have no textual parallels in the other two collections. The closest parallels can usually be found in Tibetan translations of (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda texts, but many of the texts in the *Dīrghāgama* lack even a Tibetan translation.

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provided numerous helpful comments. Jens-Uwe Hartmann kindly provided the scans of the *Dīrghāgama* folios in the American collection, and Cynthia Peck-Kubaczek corrected my English.

According to a radiocarbon dating ( $^{14}\text{C}$ ), the earliest possible date for the production of our manuscript is the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> The exact place of origin is not known. However, the antiquity dealer who sold the manuscript provided the information that it was discovered by chance in Gilgit. Indeed, its formal aspects do show a close similarity to later manuscripts from the famous Gilgit finds.<sup>5</sup>

The town of Gilgit lies on ancient trade routes in northern Pakistan, in a region that was called Paṭola or Palola at the time our manuscript was written. The town became famous after a number of manuscripts were discovered there in 1931 and cursory excavations were undertaken in 1938. The original function of the building in whose ruins the manuscripts were found is still not conclusively clear.<sup>6</sup> With very few exceptions, the manuscripts in the find are written on birch-bark and date to the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries (or slightly later).<sup>7</sup> Two kinds of standardised scripts were used. Lore Sander has called them Gilgit/Bamiyan, type 1 (GB 1), and Gilgit/Bamiyan, type 2 (GB 2), since both are also attested in Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> Because GB 2 gradually developed into the regional script of greater Kashmir, it is also called Proto-Śāradā (PŚ); it corresponds in general to the north Indian script

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4 The possible period of production lies between 764 and 1000 CE. Cf. Allon et al. 2006, 279–280, n. 3.

5 A truck driver independently informed Andrew Glass (a scholar who visited the area soon after the find) that in 1998, a manuscript of similar shape and a few other objects were found in a hole in a field near the so-called Kargah Buddha and the Gilgit River, at a place called Basin (see Melzer 2010, 4–5). While it is uncertain whether the account of the dealer (see Sadakata 1999; also mentioned in Hartmann 2000, 360, n. 4) can be trusted, and also whether the manuscript reported by the truck driver is the same as our *Dirghāgama*, but its close formal similarities with the manuscript of the *Vinayavastvāgama* point to the Gilgit area as a probable place of origin.

6 On the Gilgit manuscripts, see the references in Melzer 2010, 5, n. 21, and especially von Hinüber 2014. For reflections on the shape of the building where the manuscripts were found, see Fussman 2004. For related discoveries of Buddhist bronzes and inscriptions, see in particular von Hinüber 2004 and 2007.

7 The manuscript of the *Sarvadharmaguṇavyūharājasūtra* is written on palm-leaf. It has been studied and edited by von Criegern (2009) in his dissertation (currently in preparation for publication). Two other manuscripts contain pages of “clay-coated paper”, as they are referred to in von Hinüber 2014, 91.

8 For descriptions, see Sander 1968, 122–123, 137. For the problems involved in naming these scripts, see Sander 2007, 126–129. The manuscripts written in GB 2 from Tumšūq and Toyoq (northern Silk Road in central Asia) were imported, or copied from imported manuscripts, according to Sander 1968, 158–159. For details about GB 1 and the probable dates of its developed type from about the 6<sup>th</sup> century, see Sander 1968, 123, 129, 134. For GB 2 corresponding by and large with the alphabet *m* of Sander, see Sander 1968, 141–148, 154–161, Tafeln 21–26 and Hu-von Hinüber 1994, 42 (printed as “41”) note 1, 520–521. An overview of the research that has been done on GB 2 is offered in Hu-von Hinüber 1994, 37–40.

Siddhamātrkā, described by Al-Bīrūnī at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> GB 2 gained general acceptance in the Gilgit area after the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> The script has an elegant and even calligraphic appearance, due to alternating straight, broad lines and diagonal, very thin lines, with the nib slanting to the left.<sup>11</sup> Sander has examined two manuscripts in which she has recognized two types of this script,<sup>12</sup> the more developed closely resembling the script used in the *Dirghāgama* manuscript. In addition to the formal calligraphic type of writing, a more cursive form was also used in both scripts (GB 1 and GB 2), e.g., for colophons and interlinear insertions.<sup>13</sup> Thus far, there have been no further attempts to study this script more systematically, with the exception of the numerals in the Gilgit manuscripts.<sup>14</sup> But even a brief look at the facsimile editions shows that amongst the Gilgit manuscripts, there are several handwriting variants of the already established types of script (GB 1 and GB 2). More research is required in order to ascertain whether these variants existed concurrently, or if they have a chronological order.

In contrast to the older manuscripts from Gilgit written in GB 1, which contain only Mahāyāna and Rākṣā texts,<sup>15</sup> the majority of the later manuscripts written in

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<sup>9</sup> Sander 2007, 128–129. For an attempt at a more precise definition within the regional development of the script, see appendix II.

<sup>10</sup> In this context, an inscription on a bronze image of Varṣa appears to be quite important. It is dated to the period of the ruler Navasurendrādityanandī, and is the last inscription on a bronze of the Palola Śāhis that contains the symbol for 20 of the old addition numerical system, rather than the new place-value system; see von Hinüber 2004, 28–31, Nr. 11, Abb. 3, where it is dated to 645–654 CE. It also represents one of the last examples for the tripartite *akṣara ya* in dated bronze inscriptions (ibid. p. 30). For the proposed dates of the dissemination of GB 2, see Sander 1968, 160 (6<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries), Sander 1989, 111 (7<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries), von Hinüber 1983, 61–62 (from about 630 CE), von Hinüber 1986–87, 226 (from about 620–30 CE), and von Hinüber 2004, 89, 99 (under Navasurendrādityanandī, who ruled from about 644 or 655 to about 685 CE). Lore Sander (2007, 130–131) has suggested the possibility that both scripts existed simultaneously for a while, at least until Navasurendrādityanandī, and that Siddhamātrkā/GB 2/PŚ was probably introduced into Greater Gandhāra between the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>11</sup> Sander 1968, 141–142; Sander 1989, 112; Sander 2007, 130–131.

<sup>12</sup> See Sander 1968, 142–143. The relevant manuscripts are SHT 638, from Central Asia, and a *Prātimokṣasūtra* manuscript from Gilgit (von Hinüber 1979, 341, Nr. 3a). For the two main types widely evidenced in GB 2, see appendix II.

<sup>13</sup> Sander 1989, 107–108. This variant of the script can be compared with inscriptions on stone and bronzes.

<sup>14</sup> Frentz 1987. Unfortunately, this important study has remained unpublished. A detailed palaeographic study is also not available for GB 1. This lack has been pointed out in von Hinüber 1979, 336, Frentz 1987, 3, and Tripathi 1995, 14.

<sup>15</sup> The very few exceptions concern fragments from texts that were circulated in a Mahāyāna and a non-Mahāyāna environment, such as the *Pradaḥṣiṇagāthās* and the *Adbhutadharmaparyāya*.



GB 2/PŚ belong to the milieu of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda branch of Buddhism.<sup>16</sup> According to the evidence known today, this shifting focus of attention also seems to be testified by book cult practices (the donation of manuscripts of Buddhist Mahāyāna sūtras). This practice seems to have come to an end during the reign of Navasurendrādityanandi;<sup>17</sup> subsequent rulers and their wives only donated bronze images, although some of these are of extraordinary artistic quality. While a few of the earliest bronzes show figures from the Mahāyāna pantheon, such as Avalokiteśvara and Prajñāpāramitā, the later bronzes mainly represent Buddhas or the bodhisattva Maitreya and therefore cannot be safely attributed to a particular Buddhist tradition.<sup>18</sup> The *Dirghāgama* manuscript, written in the developed form of GB 2/PŚ, belongs to this later (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda tradition of Buddhist manuscripts.

The size of the folios (10 × 50 cm)<sup>19</sup> is wider and slightly shorter in length than the large palm-leaf manuscripts from eastern India. The text is written in eight lines, with a few exceptions (seven and nine lines). On the left half of the folios, lines three to six are interrupted after the first third by a square space around the string-hole, through which a string, however, has never been drawn, as can be gleaned from the perfectly round state of preservation (Figure 1).<sup>20</sup> The general appearance of the script is even, and the variation between thin and broad lines

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**16** There are only a few Mahāyāna texts, and most are preserved only as fragments: one folio of the *Bhaiṣajyaguru(vaiḍūryaprabhārāja)sūtra* (Ser. no. 32), two copies of the *Samghāṭasūtra* (Ser. no. 39 and Śrīnagar Collection no. 1S; the script of ser. no. 39 differs from the *Dirghāgama* manuscript and shows more frequently older *akṣara* types), one folio of a text similar to the *Daśabhūmikāsūtra* (Ser. no. 57: GBM 3338–3339), and a loose parallel to the final part of the *Aparimitāyūḥsūtra* (Ser. no. 61b: GBM 3366). The only extant Rakṣā texts are fragments of the *Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñī* (one folio as Ser. no. 56a in New Delhi and many fragments in Śrīnagar) and a *mahārakṣa* added after the *Hayagrīvaśāstra* in GB 1 script (Ser. no. 33b: GBM 2459–2460). A few fragments are still unidentified and their affiliation is therefore unclear (Ser. no. 42, 51e, 52d, 56g [GBM 3344 contains key-words from the *Arthaśāstra*], 57, 59a). Finally, there are also non-Buddhist texts, namely a grammatical fragment (see Kaul Shastri 1939 und von Hinüber 2014), two medical treatises (see Kaul Shastri 1939 and Ser. no. 20: *Annapānavidhi*), and two folios of the *\*Devītantrasadbhāvasāra*, a *śaiva* tantric text (Ser. nos. 41 and 56e, see Sanderson 2009, 50–51, note 22, however, the suggested date of the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century appears to be slightly too early). The dominance of (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda texts in GB 2 has also been mentioned in Sander 2007, 130, note 62. References to the type of script used in these Gilgit manuscripts can be found in Frentz 1987, 76–162. For details of all these manuscripts, see von Hinüber 2014.

**17** See von Hinüber 2004, 91.

**18** The fact that many of these depict the Buddha with a crown and wearing jewellery is not necessarily proof that they belong to the Mahāyāna tradition.

**19** Hartmann 2002a, 133.

**20** On folio 384v, the blank space for the string-hole is unusually placed between lines 4 and 6. The few leaves written in nine lines show the string-hole between lines 4 and 5. The exact mea-

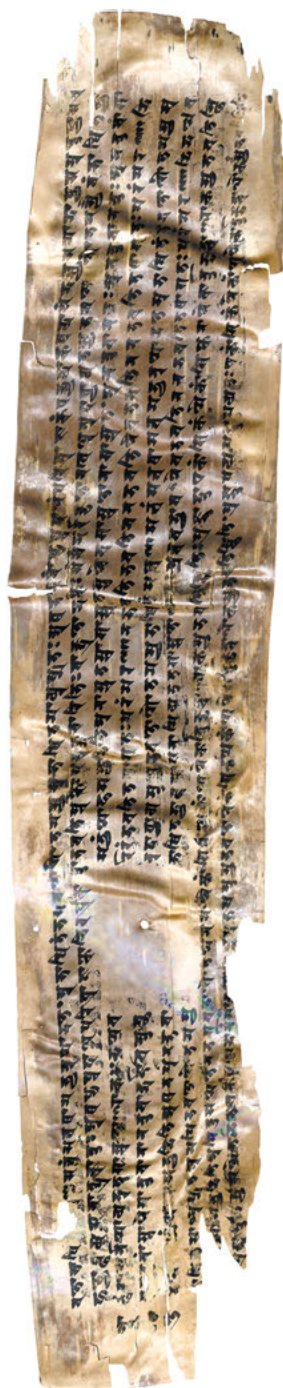


Fig. 1: Dīrghāgama Manuscript, folio 419 r



Fig. 2: Dīrghāgama Manuscript, last folio 454 v



Fig. 3: *Vinayavastvāgama* Manuscript, last folio 523 r (after GBM 1050)

of the *akṣaras* gives it an elegant and almost calligraphic appearance. The individual texts and verse summaries (*uddāna*) of the manuscript are set apart by small empty squares, mostly two lines tall, bordered by double *daṇḍas* at both ends. The end of the entire text is marked by three large decorated circles (Figure 2). Their geometric flower shape, drawn with the help of a compass, resembles the decorations on the last page of the *Vinayavastvāgama* manuscript from Gilgit of about the same period (Figure 3). Of all the Gilgit manuscripts published in facsimile, the *Vinayavastvāgama* manuscript is the only one with detailed ornaments, although these surpass in elaboration those found in the *Dirghāgama* manuscript.<sup>21</sup> The *Vinayavastvāgama* manuscript also shares many other similarities with the *Dirghāgama* manuscript.

The second half of the manuscript is mostly intact. Many pages, however, show damaged portions along the right or left margin. Some of the missing parts have been found as fragments, but others are lost. Birch bark consists of several layers, and with time it becomes fragile. When the layers separate, they easily break into very small fragments. Such separated, loose fragments sometimes stick to pages where they do not belong.<sup>22</sup> Occasionally, mirror images help us to recover single words or syllables, as in cases in which the original has been partly damaged or lost, but the ink has left an impression on the facing page. In other cases, if a layer of birch-bark has been folded, the *akṣaras* that shine only faintly through can be made more legible with the help of a mirror image. The observations on palaeographic peculiarities detailed below were only possible

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surements for the empty space vary, as do the measurements for the margin. For further details, see Melzer 2010, 2.

<sup>21</sup> The manuscript of the *Vinayavastvāgama* is generally written in ten lines with the exception of the last folio. It is larger than the *Dirghāgama* manuscript, measuring 66.3–66.5 cm in length and 12.2–12.5 cm in width (Hu von Hinüber 1994, 36). For a description of the manuscript, see Wille 1990, 35 and Hu-von Hinüber 1994, 36. For the different editions, see von Hinüber 2014, 93–94. The last folio is published in facsimile in GBM 1050, GM III.2 after p. xxii (the correct folio number reads 523; cf. Wille 1990, 35), and von Hinüber 2014, fig. 4. Much smaller and simpler circular ornaments can be also seen in GBM 1452 and 1706. Such geometrical flower embellishments are, however, not confined to manuscripts written in GB 2, since in a few cases they also occur in a similar shape in later manuscripts from eastern India and Nepal. See a folio from a palm-leaf manuscript of the *Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* dated to Nepal Samvat 128 (1008 CE) in the Cambridge University Library (Add. 866, folio 201; Bendall 1883, 1–4, pl. I.3), and a folio from the same text from year 14 of the reign of Nayapāla, kept at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.72.1.20ab).

<sup>22</sup> When such fragments are superficially in line with the surrounding text, it is often the case that one must take extra care to recognise that they do not belong there. Since the leaves in the US private collection are shrink-wrapped in plastic sheets, at the moment such fragments cannot be removed.

due to the fact that large sections of the manuscript are available in the form of excellent scans.<sup>23</sup>

### 3 Some typical examples of scribal errors in the manuscript

The physical condition of this manuscript is not the only problem in recovering its text. The reader is also faced with scribal errors. The following selected examples from the *Śilaskandha-nīpāta*, which is one of the three sections of the *Dirghāgama*, demonstrate some typical errors.

Misspellings due to misunderstanding the master copy occur frequently, since there are many possibilities for confusing *akṣaras* that have similar shapes.<sup>24</sup> Such misspellings are usually clear. However, difficulties arise when several such confusions occur in the same phrase, or when they occur together with other types of errors, in particular with omissions. On rare occasions, syllables or words have been distorted.<sup>25</sup> Several words have been misspelled due to association with similar words.<sup>26</sup> Sometimes, incorrect declinations or conjugations can be found.<sup>27</sup> There are also superfluous *visargas*, vowel diacritics, syllables, words and phrases. Most of these can be explained as dittography.

The most common types of scribal errors are omissions. Omissions can be as small as single *anusvāras*, vowel diacritics or syllables, or as long as words, whole

<sup>23</sup> In contrast to digital photography, scans have the advantage that information about the actual size of the manuscript is also stored. When working with the digital images of the central Asian Sanskrit manuscripts of the British Library (published at <http://idp.bl.uk/>), for example, it is almost impossible to recognize fragments belonging to the same folio because the digital photographs have been taken at different scales (even though a simple ruler is included on the images).

<sup>24</sup> E.g., *-ām* and *-o*, *ga* and *śa*, *dva* and *du* etc. For a more complete list, see Melzer 2010, 65.

<sup>25</sup> E.g. *puruṣamahālakṣaṇāni* “great marks of a man”, instead of *mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇāni* “marks of a great man” (35.7), which even gives a certain sense. In combination with omitted syllables, we read in one passage *lokeṣu* “amongst the people” for *ko(sa)leṣu* “amongst the Kosalas” (35.16). Edited passages of the *Dirghāgama* manuscript are referred to according to their number in my edition of the text. The first number denotes the sequence of the sūtra as given in Hartmann 2004a, 125–128.

<sup>26</sup> E.g., *namaskurvaṃti* instead of *satkurvaṃti* (35.29), *putravāṇa* instead of *purāṇaṇi* (35.35), *kuśalavaṃśa* instead of *kulavaṃśa* (35.51), *bhāṣiṣyati* instead of *bhaviṣyati* (35.111).

<sup>27</sup> E.g., *(vāca)yāmi* instead of *vācītāni* (35.7), *icchānaṃgalena* instead of *icchānaṃgalāyā* (35.13), *samanveṣayati* instead of *samanveṣayāmi* (35.35), *bhavati* instead of *bhavasi* (35.36), *anuprayacchati* instead of *anuprayacchatu* (35.40), *pravrajitaḥ* instead of *pravrajati* (39.23), etc.

sentences or even lines. Some may have already been in the master copy or in an earlier copy; others can be explained as haplographies. The reader can be content if he finds a remnant of an omitted word or phrase.<sup>28</sup>

The following problematic passage, whose original reading and reconstruction are quoted below, resisted a solution for quite a long time. The first problem is that the most important finite verb, *nāgamayati* “he does not wait”, was omitted. Then the following *akṣara ma* was confused for *sa*, which leads to the opposite meaning (*sagauravo* “respectful” instead of *-m agauravo* “respectless”). Following this is the word *pratigaurayitavyaṃ*, but this word is not attested in any dictionary. It was probably created in analogy to (s)*agauravo*, and must be corrected to *pratimantrayitavyaṃ*. Finally, the last verb reads in the third person plural, although a singular ending is required.<sup>29</sup>

| Original Reading                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Reconstruction                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>sopānatka[ś caṃ].r. mamāṇo ntarāntarā</i><br><i>kathām utpādayati kathāparyavasāna</i><br><i>sagauravo pratiśaḥ pratigaurayitavyaṃ</i><br><i>ma[n]yante</i><br>“... walking around with shoes, talking from<br>time to time, the end of the talk ..., he, who<br>is respectful and who is impolite; they intend<br>to ... ( <i>pratigaurayitavyaṃ?</i> )” | <i>sopānatkaś caṃ(k)r(a)mamāṇo 'ntarāntarā</i><br><i>kathām utpādayati 'nāgamayati</i><br><i>kathāparyavasānaṃ agauravo 'pratiśaḥ</i><br><i>pratimantrayitavyaṃ manya{n}te (35.21)</i><br>“... walking around with shoes, talking from<br>time to time, he does not await the end of the<br>talk [of his colleagues]. Being disrespectful and<br>impolite, he intends to oppose [the Buddha].” |

Usually, in such cases one would first search for repetitions in the same text, since repetitions are characteristic for this type of Buddhist literature. In this case, the whole phrase should be repeated in the next line, as is evidenced by the context and the Tibetan translation. But apparently the scribe omitted an entire line:<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> If a text is problematic and appears to have something added that is out of place, this most likely indicates an omission, e.g. *śramaṇoḥ śākyaputtraḥ* (“the ascetic, the Śākya son”): The apparently fitting correction of the word *śramaṇoḥ* to *śramaṇaḥ* turns out to be incorrect. As can be gleaned from other occurrences of this word group, a word has been omitted, of which only the final *visarga* remains. The correct reading is: *śramaṇo 'gautamaḥ śākyaputtraḥ* “the ascetic Gautama, the Śākya son” (35.4).

<sup>29</sup> The following conventions are used here: restorations in gaps (...); damaged *akṣara*(s) [...]; omission of (a part of) an *akṣara* without a gap in the manuscript <...>; superfluous (part of an) *akṣara* {...}.

<sup>30</sup> For further comments on this passage, see the notes to my edition of 35.21 (Melzer 2010).



*tvam tathāgatasya vyaṃ manyase* (35.23)  
“You intend to ... (vyaṃ?) the Tathāgata.”

*tvam tathāgatasya* «vṛddhavṛddhānāṃ  
*autkaḥānāṃ brāhmaṇānāṃ dharmyāyāṃ*  
*kathāyāṃ kathyamānāyāṃ sopānatkaś*  
*caṃkramamāṇo* 'ntarāntarā kathām utpādayasi  
*nāgamayasi kathāparyavasānam agauravo*  
*'pratiśaḥ pratimantrayita* vyaṃ manyase

One of the most corrupt passages in the manuscript is found in the *Prṣṭhapālasūtra*, where the text is hopelessly incomprehensible. Fortunately the topic of the fourteen questions left unanswered by the Buddha is well known from other sources:<sup>31</sup>

*śāśvato loka idam eva satyaṃ mohasatyad*  
*iti anāśvataś cāśāśvataś ca naiva śāśvato*  
*nāśāśvata • anantavān antaḥ anantavān*  
*antaḥ anantavāmga[s].[a] ... vāmś cā*  
*naivāntavā nānantavān ma jīvas tac charīraṃ*  
*bhavati tathāgataḥ paraṃ maraṇā na bhavati*  
*bhavati ca na bhavati naiva bhavati na na*  
*bhavati tathāgataḥ paraṃ maraṇod idam*  
*e + + .y.ṃ mo .. satyad iti*

*śāśvato loka idam eva satyaṃ moham*  
*anyad iti* ∶ aśāśvato lokaḥ ∣ śāśvataś  
*cāśāśvataś ca* ∣ naiva śāśvato nāśāśvataḥ  
∶ {an}antavām lokaḥ ∶ anantavām lokaḥ ∶  
{an}antavām{gā}ś (c)ā(nanta)vāmś cā ∣  
*naivāntavān* ∶ nānantavān ∣ śa jīvas tac  
*charīraṃ* ∶ anyo jīvo 'nyac charīraṃ ∣ *bhavati*  
*tathāgataḥ paraṃ maraṇā* ∣ na bhavati ∣  
*bhavati ca na bhavati* ∣ naiva bhavati na na  
*bhavati tathāgataḥ paraṃ maraṇād idam e(va*  
*sat)y(a)ṃ mo(ha)m anyad iti* ∶ (36.49)

The translation of the corrected passage reads: The world is eternal; only this is true, everything else is false. The world is impermanent. [It] is eternal and impermanent. [It] is neither eternal nor impermanent. The world is limited. The world is unlimited. [It] is limited and unlimited. [It] is neither limited nor unlimited. The *jīva* is the body. The *jīva* is something different than the body. The Tathāgata exists after death. [He] does not exist after death. [He] exists and he does not exist. He neither exists nor does he not exist after death; only this is true, everything else is false.

The appearance at this point of this passage in the manuscript is also slightly unexpected, as if perhaps a lengthier section has been omitted in the preceding part. It seems that the text of an earlier passage of the same *Prṣṭhapālasūtra* (36.16) has been botched. Here the Buddha repeats an argument of his opponent instead of saying that all the opinions of his opponents are false, which is indeed a grave intrusion into the text.

<sup>31</sup> For parallels and further details, see the notes to 36.49 in my edition. *Avagrahas*, *daṇḍas* and dotted *daṇḍas* (if a *sandhi* was not completed between two vowels) are introduced for the convenience of the reader. *Sandhis* have been left as they occur in the manuscript. The reading of the *akṣaras* *tya* instead of *nya*, and *ma/sa* instead of *sa/ma* is certain; however, it should be noted that these *akṣaras* have a similar shape.

Although the condition of the text is not as poor in all portions of the manuscript as these examples might imply, ten corruptions, including minor inconsistencies, in a single line are not an exception.

In two sūtras a few folios are missing, but they have been discovered in a later part of the manuscript, in the middle of another sūtra. They were paginated according to their new context (folios 442–445).

## 4 The manuscript's scribes

A detailed analysis of the palaeography allows us to gain some insight into the working process of the scribes. Even though the writing is a standardized calligraphic script and it can be assumed that the scribes were all trained to write in exactly the same manner, a closer look at the script reveals that several scribes worked on this manuscript. Although for the untrained eye the shape of individual *akṣaras* of the different scribes often resembles one another, there are other indications that allow us to distinguish between the different hands. The main characteristics of the individual hands is evident in the general appearance of the script, the ductus, the grade of evenness in the flow of strokes, the length and the proportions of the *akṣaras*, the different angles of slant of originally vertical lines, the width of the vertical lines due to the different angles the pen might have been held, or to slightly varying sizes of the nib, the accuracy of the straight head lines, the frequency of impurities due to putting the pen down or to the birch-bark, and finally, tendencies for preferences of certain *akṣara* shapes, e.g. for the *akṣaras ya* and *ha*. The *akṣara ya* has two different forms: one is the established tripartite old type (य य) and the other a more recent form (य), extant in Indian inscriptions from the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>32</sup> A similar case can be observed with the *akṣara ha*. While type 1 (ह) can be related to the older script GB 1, type 2 is not necessarily later (ह). However, it was only introduced in the greater Gilgit area in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, whereupon it gradually replaced the older type. It remained unchanged in the Śāradā script of Kashmir until only recently. In the ligature *hma*, some scribes prefer the newly shaped *ha*, others do not. Occasionally, the frequent occurrence of *jihvāmūḷiyas* and *upadhmāṇiyas*, or of the old *ya* form is conspicuous. This may go back to the influence of the master copy, or to the readiness of the scribe to replace these forms.

There are also two varieties of adding the diacritic *-ā* to the *akṣara sa*: either as a long horizontal stroke drawn from the left vertical to the right side of *sa*

<sup>32</sup> Sander 1968, 160f.

(𑖦𑖩), or as a small hook added at the right (𑖦𑖩𑖪). Some scribes preferred the first form, while others frequently switched from one form to the other. Even if a scribe appears to be consistent through several pages of the manuscript, there is absolutely no certainty that he will not write the other form later, be it because of a lack of concentration or for other unknown reasons. The most important characteristics of the scribes' writing of individual *akṣaras* and diacritic vowels are listed in the table below. The examples and details for scribes A and C–F are mostly taken from folios 410–430.

#### Scribe A (Figure 4)

The main characteristic of this scribe becomes evident when examining the upper horizontal strokes of the *akṣaras*, which are never straight. He begins to write them slightly below the line under which the *akṣaras* are written, in all Brāhmī scripts. Therefore the upper horizontal strokes of the *akṣaras* are slightly ascending, and the head line seems a little shaky or slightly serrated, resembling a zigzag (marked on Figure 4). This characteristic seems consistent and is typical for this scribe. The second conspicuous feature is the existence of numerous impurities that have often been unintentionally added when placing the pen on the birch-bark or putting it down (also marked on Figure 4). In contrast to the other scribes, the empty spaces between joined lines of certain *akṣaras* are very narrow, probably due to the use of a pen with a broad nib. This is especially obvious with *ka*,

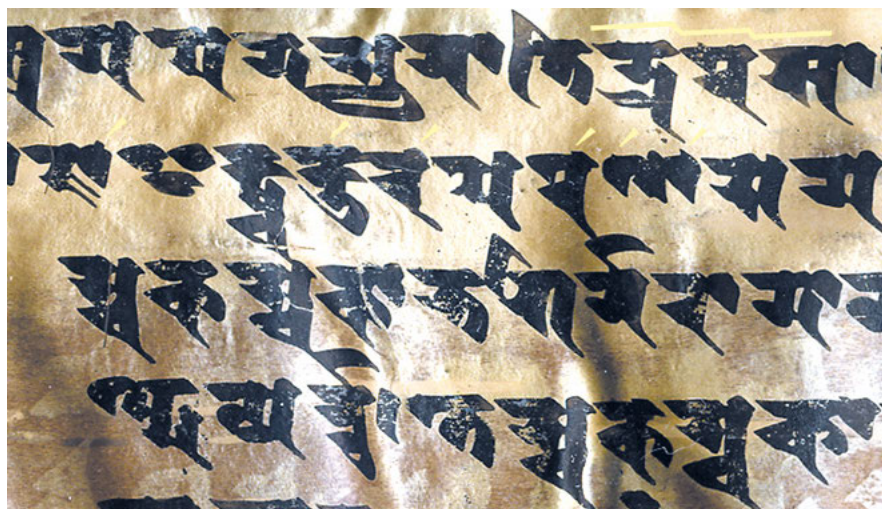


Fig. 4: Detail of 412v, by scribe A

*va*, *tha*, *śa* and *ṣa*. Vertical strokes often taper off elegantly at their lower end, a characteristic shared with the scribes C and E.<sup>33</sup>

#### Scribe C (Figure 5)

The shape of the *akṣaras* of scribe C is often similar to scribe A, however in contrast to scribe A, C's handwriting is characterised by a clear and even flow of lines. All *akṣaras* are carefully placed below the upper line. Quite different from scribe A, their heads are written as even, almost straight strokes. Unintentional impurities occur much more rarely and also less prominently. The alignment of the script is nearly vertical, but because the diacritic *-i* often slants to the lower left, it gives the false impression that all the *akṣaras* slant slightly to the lower left. Most verticals taper off, as do those of scribe A. In a few cases, the same can be observed with the diacritic *-i*.

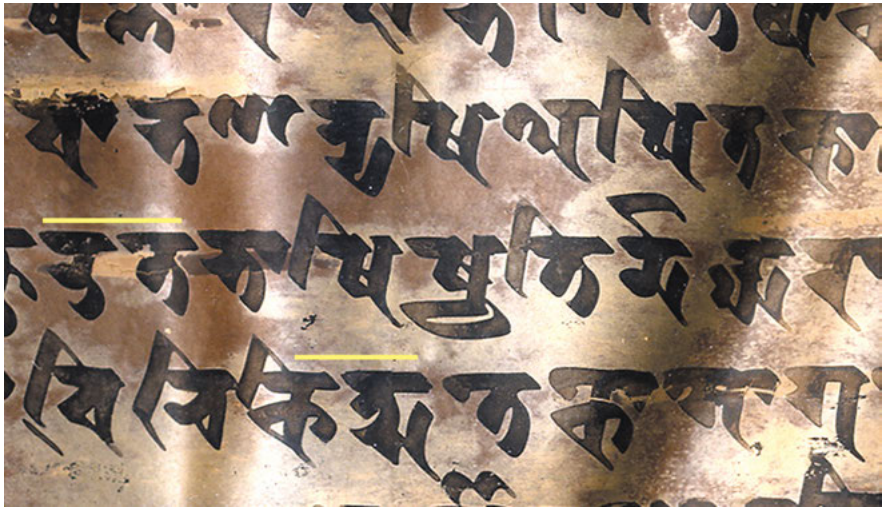


Fig. 5: Detail of 413r, by scribe C

<sup>33</sup> In a number of cases it can be observed that these tapering ends are not directly the extension of the vertical, but were added later with a second stroke. – I have retained the names of the scribes as they occur in my dissertation. For a difficult section with regard to the scribes, called “section B” (folios 442–444), see Melzer 2010, 73–74.

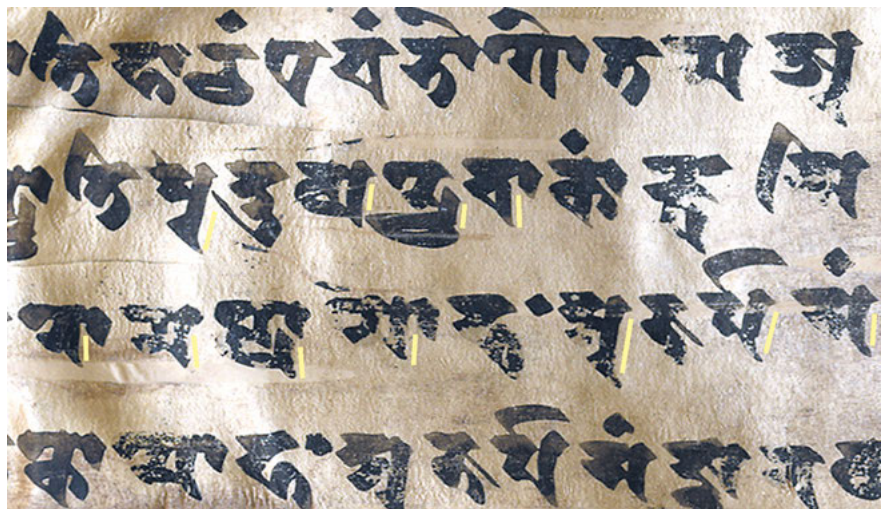


Fig. 6: Detail of 421v, by scribe D

#### Scribe D (Figure 6)

The script of scribe D is stocky and uneven. The *akṣaras* are shorter than those of the other scribes, and they lack the long elegant extensions at the foot that are characteristic for scribes A, C and G. The vertical lines are often not parallel, creating an unbalanced appearance (marked on Figure 6). The head lines are also not as straight as those of scribes C and E, and there are many unintentional impurities. A further characteristic are the knotted ends of the diacritics -e, -o, -ai, and -au (ཁྱེ རྟེ རྟེ རྟེ རྟེ).

#### Scribe E (Figure 7)

Since the fluent script of scribe E contrasts with all other hands in several respects, it is the easiest one to recognize. The eye of the reader is caught in particular by the slant of the vertical strokes to the lower left and the rounded forms, especially of the diacritics -i and -ī, of the subscribed -y- and also of subscribed *akṣaras* such as -*ṭha*, -*dha*, and -*va*, which the other scribes write, in contrast to scribe E, at acute angles. The shape of *ta* is also noteworthy, with its extremely short left leg (ཐ). The upper edge of the left leg of *ta* and also of the triangular shapes of *bha* (བ) and *ka* (ཀ) are almost horizontal. This feature is almost nonexistent in the rest of the manuscript. Due to the fluent character of the script, the ends of the verticals are not as elegantly lengthened as those of scribes A, C, F and G. In comparison with the other scribes, the use of the otherwise rare conjunct signs *ñca*, *ñsi*, *śśa*



and *ssā* on folios 424–429 is conspicuous, as well as the frequent occurrence of the *jihvāmūliya* (thirty times on ff. 424–429) and *upadhmāniya* (five times).

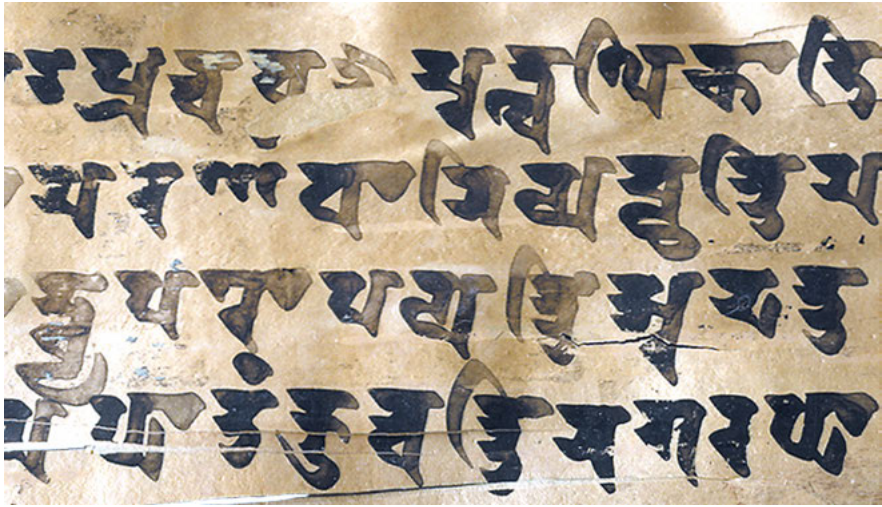


Fig. 7: Detail of 429v, by scribe E

#### Scribe F (Figure 8)

Scribe F shares many characteristics with scribe A, but there also seem to be some differences. At first glance his writing also seems similar to that of scribe C, although F's *akṣaras* are never lined up as carefully. This handwriting must still be examined more carefully to exclude the possibility that F might be the same person as A, using a re-cut pen or a new pen with a smaller nib. Despite of these uncertainties, F has been included here for the sake of completeness, even though his handwriting cannot yet be discussed in detail. The variant of the diacritic *-ī* extending downwards to the right of consonants occurs more frequently than with scribe A. Unintentional impurities are also visible, although they are less prominent than with A. The space between the *akṣaras* is on average wider than that of scribe A. In particular, he shares with A the uneven zigzag of the head line. The middle line of the *-cha* is nearly horizontal (च cchā). The old *ya* is testified at least in *yu* (यु). Type 1 of *ha* occurs mainly in the conjunct sign *hma* (ह्मा ह्म). Otherwise, the type 2 of *ha* predominates. The subscribed *-pa* in *tpa* and *lpa* is written without a head-mark.



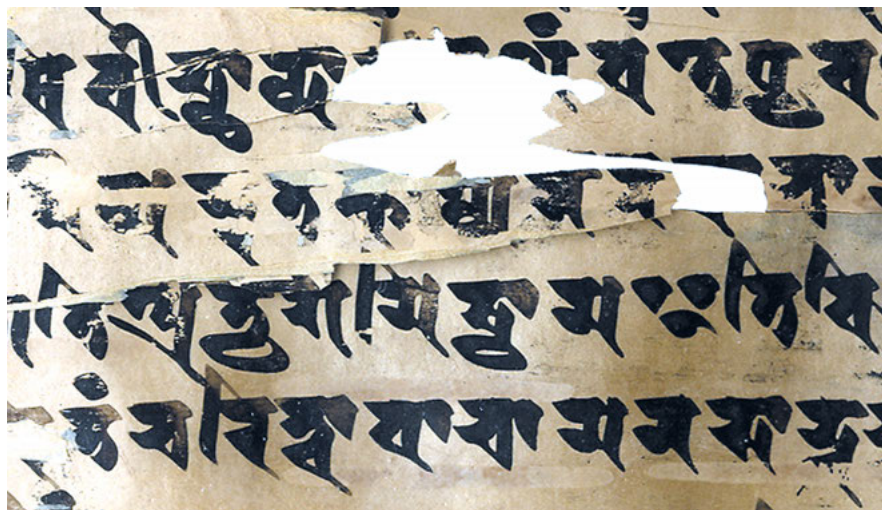


Fig. 8: Detail of 430r, by scribe F

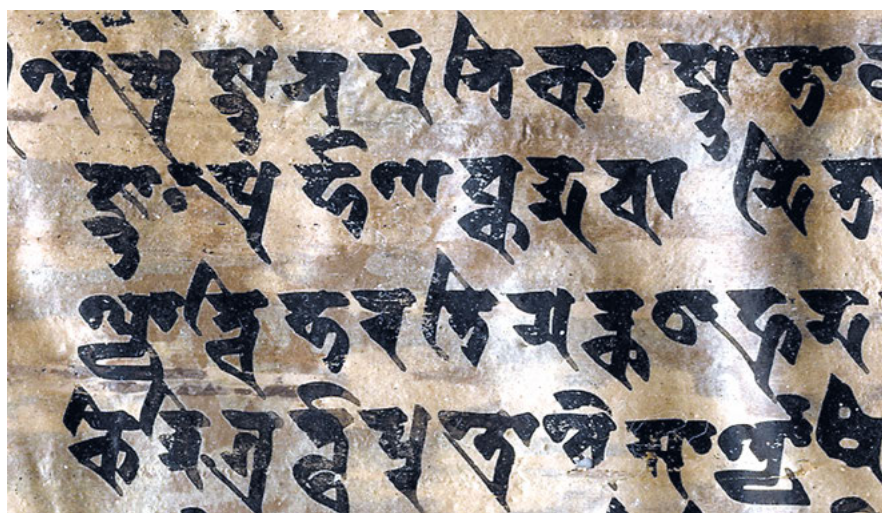


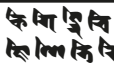
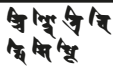
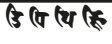
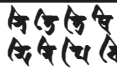
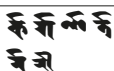
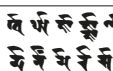
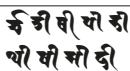
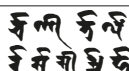
Fig. 9: Detail of 329r, by scribe G

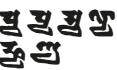
#### Scribe G (Figure 9)

Scribe G prefers a very thin nib. For this reason, the inner spaces between joined lines in *akṣaras* like *ka*, *dha*, *va*, etc. are relatively wide. Very thin diagonals, especially those of the *akṣara ca* (च), are often broken, as if the swiftly moved nib

lost contact with the birch-bark. The triangular-shaped rightward extension representing the diacritic *-ā*, *-o* or *-au* frequently shows an indentation on the right that was carefully avoided by the other scribes (e.g., ग *gā* द *pā* दे *pau* ख *yā* र *ro* रु *r̥yo*). Sometimes the diacritic *-ā* reaches down almost to the bottom of the consonant sign (या *yā* वा *vā*).

Tab. 1: Comparison of selected *akṣaras* of the different scribes

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Scribe A                                                                            | Scribe C                                                                            | Scribe D                                                                            | Scribe E                                                                            | Scribe G                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>-i</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |    |    |    |    |     |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <i>ki gi ñni ci</i><br><i>ji ñi bhi ri</i>                                          | <i>cci ṇḍi nri rvi</i><br><i>r̥ṣi śi ṣṭi</i>                                        | <i>hi rbhi</i>                                                                      | <i>ti dhi pi rji</i>                                                                | <i>ci ti ti thi</i><br><i>di ni pi vi</i>                                            |
| <p>The different hands become especially evident in the writing of the diacritic vowel signs <i>-i</i> and <i>-ī</i>. In the case of scribes A and C, the <i>-i</i> reaches vertically down to around two-thirds of the height of the (upper) consonant sign. The final tip of the <i>-i</i> of scribe A points only exceptionally slightly to the right (cf. <i>ji</i>, <i>bhi</i>). While the alignment of the <i>akṣaras</i> of scribe C is nearly vertical, the <i>-i</i> shows in many cases a slant to the lower left. The vertical part of the <i>-i</i> of scribe D also slants frequently to the lower left and its length is not uniform. In contrast to all the other scribes, scribe E writes the upper part of the <i>-i</i> more rounded instead of with an acute angle, and the vertical part is more or less aligned along the outer curve of the consonant sign, with the end tapering gradually. Scribe G offers a range of variants for <i>-i</i>, showing differences in height and length. The vertical usually slants to the lower left, and in several instances the lower end curls to the right. This scribe also gave much more space between the consonant sign and the vertical of the <i>-i</i>.</p> |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                      |
| <i>-ī</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <i>kī gī ṇī tī</i><br><i>nī nī</i>                                                  | <i>khī ghī jī j̥jī ṇī</i><br><i>dī nīm mī rī śī</i>                                 | <i>kṣī jī tī pī</i>                                                                 | <i>cī tī thī pī bhī</i><br><i>lī ṣī sī hī</i>                                       | <i>cī ṇī tī līm</i><br><i>rī śī śī svī hī</i>                                        |
| <p>In many cases the <i>-ī</i> diacritic of scribes A and C does not exceed the width of the consonant sign. It is drawn vertically down the right side of the consonant sign only at the end of lines. Scribe D writes <i>-ī</i> in several different shapes, and only very occasionally is it as wide as the consonant sign. It is often drawn much higher than by the other scribes. Scribe E usually extends the <i>-ī</i> vertically down to the bottom of the consonant sign, where it ends in a thin tail slightly curved to the right. Similar forms are sometimes employed by scribe G. Otherwise he writes the <i>-ī</i> in the same manner as scribes A and C, but less evenly.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                      |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Scribe A                                                                            | Scribe C                                                                            | Scribe D                                                                            | Scribe E                                                                            | Scribe G                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| -cha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |    |    |    |    |    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <i>cchā</i>                                                                         | <i>ccha</i>                                                                         | <i>ccha</i>                                                                         | <i>ccha cchra</i>                                                                   | <i>ccha cchi cche</i>                                                               |
| The scribes appear to be consistent in writing the middle stroke of the subscribed -cha either slanting slightly to the upper right (scribe A), horizontally (scribes E, G) or diagonally (scribes C, D).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
| ya                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |    |    |    |    |    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <i>ya</i>                                                                           | <i>ya ye</i>                                                                        | <i>ya ya yu ye</i>                                                                  | <i>ya ya yī</i>                                                                     | <i>ya yā</i>                                                                        |
| Scribes A, C and G only use the modern form. Scribe D generally writes the modern form, but in one section of around four folios (417r1–3 up to the string-hole, 419r3–v, 421v, 422r1–2, 423v) he uses the old tripartite type six times for <i>yu</i> , and once for <i>ya</i> . The same applies to scribe E, who uses the traditionally shaped <i>ya</i> four times for <i>ya</i> and once for <i>yī</i> , e.g. on folios 424–429. On a rare occasion, scribe F uses the old form in <i>yu</i> .                                                                                             |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
| -ya                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |    |    |    |    |    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <i>kya khye nya nya mya sya</i>                                                     | <i>pya kṣyā kṣye ṣya syai</i>                                                       | <i>jyā dyo</i>                                                                      | <i>cyā tsyā pyā vyū śya</i>                                                         | <i>pya pya sya lyā ḍhya nya</i>                                                     |
| The shape of the subscribed -ya also differs between the scribes. Scribe A always closes it on the right side with a thick stroke. Scribe C closes it often, although with a thin tapering line, while scribe D usually closes it with a thick stroke (but sometimes leaves it open). Scribe E leaves it open, and since round forms are characteristic for this scribe, the lower part is also much more curved. Scribe G differs in that he frequently writes the right closing stroke as a straight line, forming an acute angle. The other scribes write this part as softly rounded curve. |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
| -pa, -ma                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <i>tpā tpī lpa hma</i>                                                              | <i>lpa hma</i>                                                                      | <i>tpa hma</i>                                                                      | <i>tpā lpa hma</i>                                                                  | <i>hma hma</i>                                                                      |
| In conjunct signs with the subscribed consonant signs -pa and -ma, scribe A (and F) prefers to write them without a head-mark. Scribes E and G use the variant lacking a head-mark only occasionally, while scribes C and D usually write head-marks. Especially interesting is the use of <i>h-</i> in the conjunct sign <i>hma</i> . In general, scribes A and D write type 1 for <i>h-</i> , with type 2 is rather rare, while scribes C, E, and G use only type 2.                                                                                                                          |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |
| ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <i>ha ha ha hu</i>                                                                  | <i>hau hva hye</i>                                                                  | <i>ha hi hu</i>                                                                     | <i>ha</i>                                                                           | <i>ha hī hu he</i>                                                                  |
| For <i>ha</i> , scribes A, D and F use type 1 and 2 indiscriminately, whereas scribes C, E and G use only type 2.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |

There are also many other differences in the individual *akṣaras*. For example, there are two ways the diacritic *-ā* is attached to the consonant sign *ṭa*. Extending from the right of the head-mark, it has been written either bent down (𑂣𑂰: scribes A, G) or bent up (𑂣𑂱: scribes C, F).<sup>34</sup> In the case of the consonant sign *sa*, the diacritic *-ā* is attached either to the right vertical stroke of *sa* (𑂣𑂱) or to the left (𑂣𑂰𑂱: scribes C, D, G). Scribes A, E and F use both styles, although scribe E prefers attaching the *-ā* to the left vertical stroke. Scribe G attaches both variants of *-ā* also to the modern shaped *ya* (𑂣𑂱𑂰𑂱). The right stroke of the triangular *e* is written vertically only by scribe A (𑂣𑂱), while with the other scribes it slants (𑂣𑂱). Scribes C and D occasionally round the upper left corner (𑂣𑂱). The triangular-shaped subscribed consonant signs *va*, *ṭha*, and *dha* are written in acute angles by scribes A, C, F and G (𑂣𑂱𑂰 *ddha*, 𑂣𑂱𑂰 *ṭho*), but more rounded on the left side by scribe E (𑂣𑂱𑂰 *ṭha*, 𑂣𑂱𑂰 *vdhe*, 𑂣𑂱𑂰 *nva* 𑂣𑂰 *sva*). Scribe D uses both variants. The size of the space between loops, as with *ka*, *dha*, *va* and *ṣa* differs from one scribe to the other. Scribe A has the smallest, while scribe G often lapses into the other extreme. Finally, the different hands can also be identified based on preferences in writing the *virāma*, although even the same scribe often uses many different shapes. The diagonal line is sometimes placed slightly above the upper line (𑂣𑂱 *m\**, 𑂣𑂱 *t\**: scribe A), although it is usually together with the upper line (𑂣𑂱 *t\** 𑂣𑂱 *n\** 𑂣𑂱 *m\**: scribe C). In some cases it also starts above the upper line and extends only slightly, if at all, beneath it (𑂣𑂱 *t\**: scribe D). Scribe E attaches the *virāma* stroke to the consonant sign (𑂣𑂱𑂰 *m\**). Scribe G prefers a different variant, with a horizontal stroke on the top (𑂣𑂱 *m\**), but he also uses other forms. This variant is also found occasionally in the writing of scribes A and C (𑂣𑂱 *m\**).

## 5 Results of the palaeographical examinations

It was not without reason that a great deal of stress has been given to describing small details. What a palaeographically trained eye sees on an enlarged digital image becomes much less evident when the folio is viewed as a whole, or when the text is read mainly for understanding. If all our observations are taken together, some astonishing insights can be gleaned. First, it is probable that the so-called “Leit-*akṣaras*” *ya* and *ha* should only be considered indicators of a likely early date with reservation. At the time of our manuscript, most of its scribes (A, C, G) only used the newly introduced type *ya*. However, scribes D, E

<sup>34</sup> The same possibilities exist for the consonant sign *ṇa*. This still needs to be examined throughout the manuscript.

and rarely F also used the old tripartite type in addition to the modern *ya*. Scribe D wrote the old type more often in combination with the vowel *-u*. With regard to the two types of *ha*, scribe A, who used the modern *ya*, also used the newly introduced type 2 of *ha*, but not exclusively: he also used type 1, especially in ligatures. Similarly, scribes D and F used both types of *ha*. However, scribes C, E and G only wrote the new form, even in ligatures. Since scribe E also used the old *ya*, the only scribes who exclusively used the modern forms of *ya* and *ha* are scribes C and G. If one were to date possible other manuscripts produced by scribes C and G only on the basis of these *akṣaras*, one would be tempted to regard them as later than those of the other scribes! There cannot be enough care invested in interpreting such fine differences. It should also be kept in mind that the influence of master copies may have been stronger in some places than in others, and so-called transitional periods, during which later and younger shapes of certain *akṣaras* were being introduced, may have lasted much longer than previously thought. In general, occurrences of variant *akṣaras* can only be counted statistically, and should never be used as the sole indicator for differentiating between several scribes or for dating.

During the Copenhagen Workshop (2007), it was suggested that the manuscript may have been repaired at a later point in time, and that several pages were then replaced. This could explain the discrepancies in the preference of old and new shapes. However, if the distribution of the scribes throughout the manuscript is examined, it can be shown that this was certainly not the case (Table 2).<sup>35</sup>

The *Dirghāgama* manuscript was written by at least five to six persons. They probably worked in part simultaneously on different sections of the manuscripts, taking turns in irregular intervals. A single scribe may have written portions of only a few lines, or up to thirty-three successive folios. For example, in a section of twenty-one folios (410–430), which was written by five different people, the scribes changed not less than ten times.

Every scribe seems to have used his own pen, as can be gleaned from the different nib widths. The exact composition of the ink also varies in the manuscript. While the ink on folios 405–412 of scribe A, for example, is very dark, the ink of

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<sup>35</sup> This table is not yet complete. To attribute scribes to all of the leaves, an edition of the entire *Dirghāgama* is first needed. Many folios are damaged on the left side and thus, the pagination is lost. Included in this table are only those leaves whose sequence and scribe is quite certain. The first four numbers in square brackets refer to the numbering on the black and white photographs where the pagination is not preserved. I am grateful to Takamichi Fukita for sharing his reconstructions of the highly fragmented folios of the first part of the manuscript. Blair Silverlock kindly informed me of his identification of scribe C for folios 340v–341r. The attribution of folios 330–384 is difficult because of the inferior quality of the available photographs.

**Tab. 2:** Distribution of the different scribes throughout the *Dīrghāgama* manuscript

| Scribe A/F | Scribe C  | Scribe D  | Scribe A/F | Scribe C                  | Scribe D                 | Scribe E | Scribe G |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------|----------|
|            |           | [32R]     |            |                           | 284v                     |          |          |
|            | [32verso] |           |            | 287–319                   |                          |          |          |
|            |           | [34R]     |            |                           |                          |          | 327–340r |
|            | [34verso] |           |            | 340v–341r?                |                          |          |          |
|            | 80–95     |           |            |                           | 341v–354?                |          |          |
| 96–118r?   |           |           |            |                           |                          | 355–368  |          |
|            |           | 262r      |            | 369                       |                          |          |          |
|            | 262v      |           | 370–376    |                           |                          |          |          |
|            | 269       |           |            |                           | 377                      |          |          |
|            | 271       |           |            | 378                       |                          |          |          |
|            |           | 272r      |            |                           | 379–389                  |          |          |
|            |           | 272v      |            | 390                       |                          |          |          |
|            |           | 273r      | 405–412    |                           |                          |          |          |
|            |           | 273v      |            | 413–416                   |                          |          |          |
|            |           | 274r      |            |                           | 417r1–3<br>(string-hole) |          |          |
|            |           | 274v      |            | 417r3 (string-hole)–419r2 |                          |          |          |
|            |           | 275r      |            |                           | 419r3–v                  |          |          |
|            |           | 275v      |            | 420–421r                  |                          |          |          |
|            |           | 277r      |            |                           | 421v–422r2               |          |          |
|            |           | 277v      |            | 422r3–423r                |                          |          |          |
|            |           | 278r      |            |                           | 423v                     |          |          |
|            |           | 278v      |            |                           |                          | 424–429  |          |
|            |           | 279r      | 430–441    |                           |                          |          |          |
|            |           | 279v      | 443        |                           |                          |          |          |
|            |           | 281–282r  |            |                           | 445                      |          |          |
|            |           | 282v      | 446–449    |                           |                          |          |          |
|            |           | 283r      |            |                           |                          | 450–451  |          |
|            |           | 283v–284r | 452–454?   |                           |                          |          |          |



the folios 424–429 of scribe E seems to have been thinner and more transparent, which also allowed for a more fluid handwriting.

Scribes C and G, who are most consistent in using the new forms for *ya* and *ha*, sometimes start on the verso of a folio, or end on a recto whose verso has been written by somebody else. It is therefore impossible to consider these parts later restorations, even if one disregards the fact that the manuscript does not show any traces of use. The few interlinear additions written with another pen (or with the turned edge of the same nib?) were most probably written by the same scribes, and surely not long after the folio or the manuscript was completed.

As can also be observed on the *Vinayavastvāgama* manuscript from Gilgit, on several pages, towards the end of the last line there are much wider spaces between the *akṣaras* (Figure 10), or they are written much closer together than usual (Figure 1).<sup>36</sup> This indicates that the folio's text was copied in close agreement with the layout of the original, especially with regard to the end of the pages.<sup>37</sup> Occasionally, line fillers (Figures 10b–c, f) conclude lines where the text has ended before the right margin.<sup>38</sup> In a few other cases, the last *akṣaras* have been deleted and are written on the following page (Figure 10c–e). This was probably meant to conceal the fact that the last line ended earlier than the right margin of the original.<sup>39</sup> If it is assumed that several scribes worked on the manuscript simultaneously, ending pages or folios in close correspondence to the original would have been of utmost importance. However, it is uncertain whether every page corresponded in this manner, or only some of them. Also, the script itself provides a good means for concealing omissions in the text, or attempts to keep to the lines of the original. For example, if needed it is possible to write certain consonant signs, for example *na*, with the vowel diacritic *-o* twice as wide as normal. The horizontal extensions can be either attached to the right and to the left (𑖭), or to the right and on the top (𑖭𑖳), or, much rarer, only on the top (𑖭𑖳).

One of the most surprising discoveries is the teamwork of scribes C and D, at least in two sections of the manuscript (folios 262–284 and 413–423). Very often, one scribe wrote the recto while the other was responsible for the verso. In the

<sup>36</sup> For examples from the *Vinayavastvāgama* manuscript, see the folios from the *Saṅghabhedavastu*: 349, 384v, 408v, 430v, 431v, 476v, from GBM: 682, 712, 715, 727, 745, 754, 791, 876, 899 and 1021. For the other extreme, see 419r, 423v (*Dirghāgama*) and GBM 959 (*Vinayavastvāgama*).

<sup>37</sup> Hartmann 2002a, 145.

<sup>38</sup> Line fillers can also be found in many other Buddhist manuscripts; see, e.g., Sander 1988, 547. For examples from the *Vinayavastvāgama* manuscript from Gilgit, see folios 72v (GBM 727), 282v (GBM 877), 308v (GBM 929), 333r (*Saṅghabhedavastu*).

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., folios 404v, 417v, 419v and 425v. For an example from the *Vinayavastvāgama* manuscript, see folio 293v (Yamagiwa 2001, 78).



**Fig. 10:** Examples of text justification on the folio: (a) 392v7–8 (b) 396v7–8 (c) 404v7–8 (d) 417v7–8 (e) 425v7–8 (f) 427v7–8

latter section, scribe D has written two and a half lines on 417r. His partner C finished the rest of 417r and continued until 419r2. Scribe D then took his turn from 419r3 and continued to the verso. Scribe C wrote 420–421r and 422r3–423r, while scribe D completed 421v–422r2 and 423v. How can we imagine their working

process? Were they sitting next to each other, with one writing half a folio and then passing it on to his colleague to complete? In this case, the relevant folio(s) of the master copy would also have to be passed on (and turned over). When the second scribe finished his part, he would have placed the finished folios aside, while in the meantime the next folio(s) may have already been waiting for him. If in such a situation the first scribe did not finish exactly with the end of the page of the master copy, he would have had to show his colleague where to continue. It is easy to imagine how chaotic and confusing this might become. And indeed, most probably did become. For example, the last folio by scribe A after folio 412 and also the two subsequent folios (by other scribes) have been mistakenly inserted into a later part of the manuscript, where they were numbered according to their new context as 443, 442 and 444, when the final pagination was added.<sup>40</sup> The text of folio 444 continues on the folio paginated as 413, in the hand of scribe C. How exactly the misplacement of the three folios happened cannot be ascertained, but it might be explained by the fact that several scribes were working simultaneously.

Another imaginable working procedure of the two scribes C and D would be that they switched places several times (for whatever reason). This would have had the advantage that single folios could stay in their context and would not have to be passed around. In any case, the actual procedure cannot be reconstructed with absolute certainty. But the manuscript evidences that scribal errors are much more frequent in parts where the scribes changed often. This leads us back to the starting point: those passages that are highly corrupt.

The unclear passage of the *Prṣṭhapālasūtra* mentioned above briefly (ed. 36.16), in which it appears that the opponents of the Buddha, the *parivrajakas*, anticipate a later argument of the Buddha where no parallel for such an anticipation can be found in the Pali or Chinese versions, happens to fall directly at the break at the end of the two and a half lines written by scribe D on 417r1–3 and the beginning of the work by scribe C.<sup>41</sup> The next exchange of scribes occurs at 419r3, with scribe D. This is also where one of the most corrupted passages starts (as referred to above, ed. 36.49). Scribe D apparently had no context for his portion of the text, and therefore he has even mistaken *akṣaras* that are otherwise rarely misread, such as *sa* and *ma* (*mohasatya*-, “truth of delusion” instead of *moham anya*-, “everything else is false”, etc.). The switching of folios between scribes that follows, however, went on without larger problems.

As enigmatic as the working praxis of this scribe duo may be, a similar case has been noticed by Lore Sander for a central Asian manuscript of the

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<sup>40</sup> The attribution of folios 442 and 444 is not yet settled.

<sup>41</sup> Scribe C continued in the middle of the sentence. The error might, of course, already have been in the master copy, but the change of scribes is suggestive.

*Siddhasāra* from Dunhuang,<sup>42</sup> and it is certain that there are further cases still waiting to be discovered. It is also certain that the voluminous manuscript of the *Vinayavastvāgama* from Gilgit was written by more than one person. Even in the poor photos of the facsimile edition, it is possible to differentiate at least one scribe from the others, because of his obvious characteristics as well as his similarities to scribe E of the *Dirghāgama* manuscript. In the *Vinayavastvāgama*, this scribe wrote two parts of four folios, and one part of fifteen and a half folios.<sup>43</sup>

In general, information about scribes of manuscripts and inscriptions is rare in Gilgit. For all the known Gilgit manuscripts, the names of only two scribes are mentioned in colophons; however, both belong to an earlier period of manuscript production that is not being discussed here.<sup>44</sup> Their ethnic affiliation remains mostly unsolved. Oskar von Hinüber has suggested that Saken scribes were responsible for one of the manuscripts he has studied.<sup>45</sup> But until now, the manuscript of the *Dirghāgama* has not yet revealed any clues about the ethnic or linguistic affiliation of the scribes. Nonetheless, as described above it is possible to learn something about their working praxis.

## 6 A second pagination system

Thus far, we have only considered the style of the script and the shape of particular *akṣaras*. But another interesting detail becomes visible on enlarged images: Many folios contain a very tiny and sometimes almost invisible number that differs from the main page number and which was written either to the extreme left or right (Figure 11). Since the margins are frequently damaged, not all of these numbers are preserved. However, there are also many folios of the manuscript that do not appear to have been numbered in this way. Several sequences of numbers exist, starting in irregular intervals with number 1 and running up to 33 at the most. These numbers were not inserted for the benefit of readers of the manuscript. It rather appears that the scribes have marked their respective portions in this manner before the final page numbers were added. Thus, scribe C

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<sup>42</sup> Sander 1988, 547–548.

<sup>43</sup> These similarities do not necessarily imply that the scribe is identical with E. Further research is required. See folios 258–274r (GBM 828–860), 294–297 (GBM 900–907), 340v–344v (*Saṅghabhedavastu*).

<sup>44</sup> For the two scribes of the *Ajitasenavyākaraṇa* and a *Samghāṭasūtra* (dated in the year 3 of presumably the Laukika Era, 627/28 CE) see von Hinüber 1980, 63–64, 69–72; 2004, 25–27 (Nr. 10), 78–80 (Nr. 39B).

<sup>45</sup> Von Hinüber 1980, 51; 1983, 58–59; 1988, 43.

has marked his portion of folios 287–319 with numbers 1–33. Scribe A marked his folios 370–376 with numbers 1–7.<sup>46</sup> Scribe D numbered folios 379–389 up to number 11.<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, C and D, who were identified above as working in close cooperation, applied a single joint numbering system starting on folio 413 and ending on folio 423 with number 11.<sup>48</sup> This is the part of the text that directly follows the wrongly placed folios 442–444, which lack such numbers. It can be assumed that using these additional numbers was originally meant to prevent such confusions. Scribe E numbered his folios 424–429 from 1 to 6. Scribe F (?) numbered his portion of folios 430–441 from 1 to 12,<sup>49</sup> and finally, scribe E numbered his last portion of the two folios 450–451 accordingly with numbers 1–2. All scribes but E wrote the numerals in the extreme left margin next to lines 7–8. Scribe E wrote them in the right margin next to the same lines.

In contrast to the main page numbers written according to the old system of addition, with special symbols for twenty, thirty, a hundred, etc., for the small numbers of the individual scribes, the newly introduced place-value system was used, with symbols for the numbers one to nine, and a small circle symbolising zero. This system, along with the shapes of the numerals, became widely popular in Indian and Southeast Asian inscriptions during the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and by the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century in inscriptions it had replaced the old system. It also occurs in the inscriptions of the Palola Śāhis of Gilgit and their contemporaries from the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>50</sup> Until today, it is still not precisely known when and where this new system started.<sup>51</sup> The shape of the numerals can be explained for the most part as being a very cursive and economical variant of writing Indian Brāhmī numerals. It is quite different from the ornate type of letter numerals used for paginating Buddhist manuscripts in the numerical system of addition.

The numerals on the Gilgit manuscripts have been studied by Hanns-Peter Frentz. He has also referred to manuscripts that were not published in the facsimile edition, especially those from Śrīnagar. His material clearly shows that pagination according to the old system of addition continued to be used in Gilgit long after the place-value system is found in inscriptions. Thus far, only three

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<sup>46</sup> The margin containing numeral 1 is not preserved.

<sup>47</sup> Only the numeral 10 and part of 11 are preserved. There are also traces on 383r and 383r visible. Regrettably, the available photographs of the Hirayama Collection do not enable us to see such small details clearly.

<sup>48</sup> The last folio lacks a number because the margin is damaged.

<sup>49</sup> Only the numerals on the first and last folio are preserved.

<sup>50</sup> For the inscriptions, see appendix I.

<sup>51</sup> For this system in general, see Frentz 1987, 66–68 and Salomon 1998, 61–63.



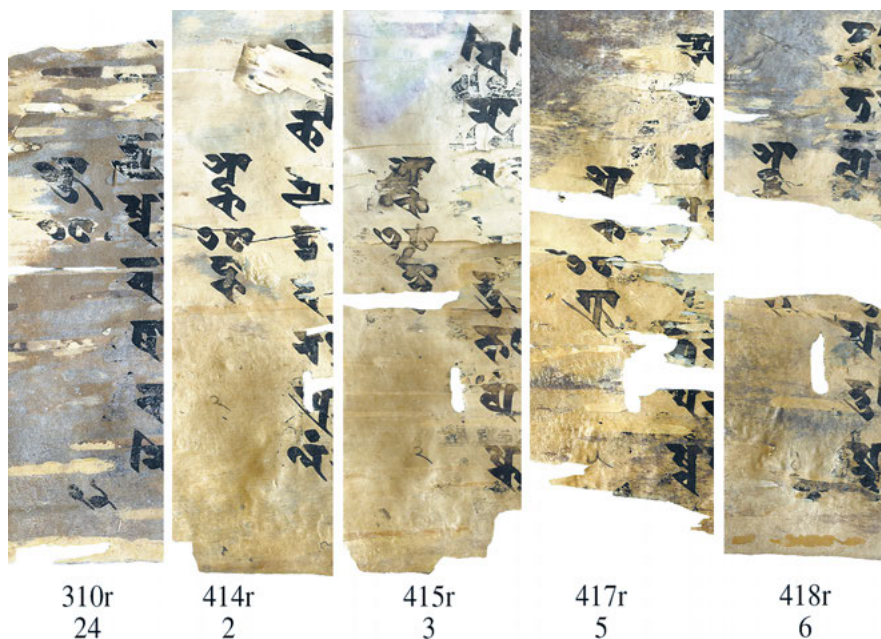


Fig. 11: Examples of a secondary pagination system, beneath the main folio numbers

exceptions are known.<sup>52</sup> When comparing the shapes of the numerals of these three manuscripts with the tiny numerals of the *Dirghāgama* manuscript, several differences are noticeable. It seems that during the first hundred to two hundred years after the introduction of the new system, a stylistic development took place that has hardly been explored. On one hand, the numerals of the *Dirghāgama* manuscript show similarities with the medieval predecessors of our so-called Arabian numerals. On the other hand, not all of them can easily be found in palaeographic tables for ancient Indian scripts.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Frentz 1987, 6. The first of the three exceptions are fifteen folios of a *Samghāṭasūtra* written in probably an early type of GB2/PŚ (Ser. no. 39; Frentz 1987, 125–126; GBM 2306–2325, 2326–2335). The second one comprises four leaves of the *Dārikāgāthās* (Frentz 1987, 147; GBM 3229–3236). And finally, there are a few folios out of a total of 121 folios from another *Samghāṭasūtra* in early GB2/PŚ from Śrinagar (“Manuscript D” in von Hinüber 1980, 69–72; 1983, 53; 2004, 25–27, 31, Nr. 10 [previously “manuscript A” in von Hinüber 1979, 351]; see also Frentz 1987, 127–130). In the latter manuscript, both numeral systems can be found, in alternating series.

<sup>53</sup> In addition to the important but unpublished study by Frentz, some Gilgit numerals are also reproduced in Sander 1968, Tafel 26, and Wille 1990, 20. Salomon 1998, 61 mentioned the difficulties in reading the numerals of the new system correctly.



It appeared therefore advisable to collect evidence of early place-value system numerals from the larger Gilgit area. The following table includes all the *Dirghāgama* numerals, the few Gilgit examples studied by Frentz,<sup>54</sup> and the numerals found in inscriptions.<sup>55</sup> Recently, Klaus Wille and Masanori Shono also discovered six tiny numerals written in addition to the main pagination on a few fragments of a *Prātimokṣasūtra* and a *Vinayavibhaṅga* manuscript belonging to the same find as the *Dirghāgama*.<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, the quality of the facsimile edition of the Gilgit manuscripts is not adequate to ascertain if perhaps similar numbers can be found in the *Vinayavastvāgama* manuscript. For comparison, several forms of the numerals of the famous Bakhshālī manuscript, a text on mathematics, are also included in the table.<sup>57</sup>

The numerals of the *Dirghāgama* were written in haste and without special care. The shape of the 4 in the *Dirghāgama* manuscript is especially noteworthy, since it differs from all the other examples with its simple economic form and the loop at the bottom.<sup>58</sup> In general, the shapes of the *Dirghāgama* numerals appear to be more cursive than the numerals in most inscriptions or in the later Bakhshālī manuscript. This is also testified by the simpler writing of the numeral 5, with no embellishment at the upper part. It is possible that such differences correspond to geographical or chronological differences. From the time of the *Dirghāgama* manuscript onwards, however, the shapes did not alter greatly, remaining basically the same in the Śāradā script of the region even until recently.<sup>59</sup>

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54 Frentz 1987, 66–70.

55 The inscriptions are referred to as they are numbered in appendix I of this article.

56 These manuscripts are written in GB 2/PŚ. I am grateful to Klaus Wille and Masanori Shono for sharing their discoveries.

57 The examples of the numerals are based on the facsimiles in Hayashi 1995. This birch-bark manuscript was found in 1881 by a peasant in the village of Bakhshālī, situated around 80 km northeast of Peshawar (Hayashi 1995, 3). It is now kept in the Bodleian Library of Oxford (Ms. Sansk. d. 14). Regarding the date, Hayashi proposes the 8<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries (ibid.) or the 12<sup>th</sup> century as the upper limit (p. 24). He does not mention the manuscript's similarity to the late Gilgit manuscripts. The 12<sup>th</sup> century is favoured by Kaul Deambi (1982, 67, 82; 2008, 51). In a short entry in Walker/Clapinson/Forbes 2004, 137, a date of the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries is given. For supporting palaeographical arguments for this date, see appendix II. The manuscript was already known to Bühler (1896, 78–79, Tafel IX), who referred to it in his palaeographical tables.

58 Cf. Frentz 1987, 21, variant 1–2.

59 For the numerals in the Śāradā script of later manuscripts, see, e.g. Slaje 1993, 46. The tables of Kaul Deambi (1982, table 7; 2008, table 6) mainly concern the inscriptional evidence. However, they are very incomplete for the early period and contain some obvious errors.

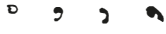
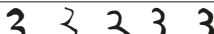
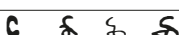
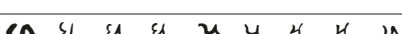
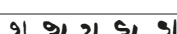
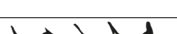
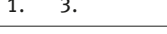
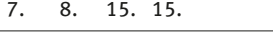
Tab. 3: Place-value number system in manuscripts and inscriptions

| Scribes of the <i>Dirghāgama</i> |                                                                                          |                                                                                                    |                                                                                          |                          |                                                                                         |                                                                                        |                          |                                                                                                      |                                                                                         |                                                                                       |                                                                                       | <i>Prātimokṣasūtra /<br/>Vinayavibhaṅga</i>                                                          |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                  | C                                                                                        | C                                                                                                  | C                                                                                        | C                        | A                                                                                       | D                                                                                      | D                        | C+D                                                                                                  | E                                                                                       | A/F                                                                                   | A/F                                                                                   | E                                                                                                    |
| 1                                |  (287?) |  297              |  307    |                          |                                                                                         |                                                                                        | (1)1 <sup>a</sup><br>389 |  413                |  424   |  430 |                                                                                       |  (450)              |
| 2                                |  (288?) |  298              |  308    |                          |  371   |                                                                                        |                          |  414                |                                                                                         |  441 |  451 |  24[9]            |
| 3                                |  389/90 |  29[9]            |  309    | [33] <sup>b</sup><br>319 |  372   |                                                                                        |                          |  415                |                                                                                         |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |  240                |
| 4                                |                                                                                          |  300 <sup>a</sup> |  310    |                          |  373   | [4] <sup>a</sup><br>382                                                                |                          |                                                                                                      | [4] <sup>a</sup><br>427                                                                 |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |  251 <sup>d</sup> |
| 5                                |  291    |  (301?)           |  311    |                          |  374   | [5] <sup>a</sup><br>383                                                                |                          |  417                |  428   |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |  242                |
| 6                                |  292    |  (302?)           |  312    |                          |  375   |                                                                                        |                          |  [4](18)            |  (4)29 |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |  520              |
| 7                                |  (29)3  |  (3)03            |  313    |                          |  37[6] |                                                                                        |                          |                                                                                                      |                                                                                         |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |                                                                                                      |
| 8                                |  294    |  (304?)           |  314    |                          |                                                                                         |                                                                                        |                          |                                                                                                      |                                                                                         |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |  -                  |
| 9                                |  295    |  (305?)           |  315    |                          |                                                                                         |                                                                                        |                          |  421 <sup>b</sup>   |                                                                                         |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |                                                                                                      |
| 0                                |  [296] |  306             |  (316) |                          |                                                                                         |  388 |                          |  422? <sup>c</sup> |                                                                                         |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |                                                                                                      |

a Only partly preserved. b Probably misspelt. c Fragment on folio 424r. d The lower part is damaged.

## 7 Sanskritisation and punctuation

If one imagines a text in a European language with half of the punctuation and most of the capitalization lacking, as well as some punctuation marks appearing in the wrong places, it becomes clear that for many passages, different possibilities in understanding would arise. One would most likely puzzle over the meaning of the text, even if one were generally familiar with it. A similar situation is found in certain prose passages in Indian manuscripts containing canonical Buddhist texts of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādins. Although canonical Buddhist texts are highly formulaic and contain numerous repetitions, difficulties in understanding may

| Inscriptions                                                                                                         | Gilgit Mss. (Frentz)                                                               | Bakhshālī Manuscript                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br>2. 3. 7. 11. 12. 15.            |   |   |
| <br>2. 6. 6. 8. 9.                  |   |   |
| <br>3.                              |   |  |
| <br>2. 3. 4. 7.                     |   |  |
| <br>1. 4. 5. 5. 12. 12. 13. 13. 15. |   |  |
| <br>6. 7.                           |   |  |
| <br>1. 3.                           |   |  |
| <br>7. 8. 15. 15.                   |   |   |
| <br>2. 9. 11. 12. 14. 14.           |   |  |
| <br>1. 9.                          |  |  |

arise when the text contains unusual phrases. It can be assumed that if a text was not clearly structured and therefore not immediately accessible to a reader, scribal errors and misunderstandings of the original may have occurred more frequently, especially when the tradition of the scribes themselves was already quite distant from the texts they were copying.

The state of the text we find in manuscripts such as the *Dirghāgama* may in part be explained by the process of copying and its sanskritisation over a longer period of time. Originally, Buddhist texts were transmitted orally. But they were also written down from an early period onwards, and these manuscripts were

copied again and again.<sup>60</sup> However, the tradition of transmitting texts orally did not cease.

Over time, the language of Buddhist texts gradually changed. When Sanskrit as a universal language for Indian literature became widely established, some Buddhist schools started to adjust their texts to this language, without translating them *per se*. The Mahāsāṃghikas, for example, transmitted their texts in a hybrid form of Sanskrit (Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit). The Sarvāstivādins (and Mūlasarvāstivādins), however, rendered their texts in a language that resembles classical Sanskrit much more closely. Still, the language of one of the oldest Sarvāstivāda manuscripts identified so far is very different from the “classical” Sanskrit of later Sarvāstivāda texts.<sup>61</sup> Many irregularities in Buddhist Sanskrit texts can be seen in connection with this gradual process of sanskritisation, even in late manuscripts such as the *Dirghāgama*. Who would have been responsible for the sanskritisation of such texts if not those who wrote and copied the manuscripts? Final consonants of case endings, for example, were added, and the *sandhi* was adjusted as required in classical Sanskrit. Since this was never done consistently, the peculiar situation arises in which correct Sanskrit endings stand alongside forms that by the time of the *Dirghāgama* manuscript must have already been regarded as antiquated or incorrect. Thus, an editor of such texts easily finds him- or herself in a moral dilemma.

A typical feature of Buddhist texts that originated in middle Indian languages is that the words were often not connected by means of *sandhi*. Such incomplete *sandhi* is also testified in many places in the *Dirghāgama* manuscript, in particular between the members of enumerations or at syntactical breaks, especially at the end of sentences.<sup>62</sup> In many other cases, however, at a certain point in the transmission of such manuscripts, the scribes adjusted such occurrences according to the general rules of Sanskrit, whereby they did not insert punctuation marks at the end of sentences. In examples where the same text is found in other manuscripts of the same school, but from a different place or period, most of the differences concern complete or incomplete *sandhi* and punctuation marks. The loss of an incomplete *sandhi* at the end of a sentence requires strong efforts on the

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<sup>60</sup> The most ancient manuscripts known so far date to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.

<sup>61</sup> See Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya 1999–2000, part 1–5.

<sup>62</sup> The oldest manuscripts written in Brāhmī have spaces between words or word groups (although not consistently). See, e.g. an early *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript (Sander 2000, 2, pls. I.1–7; 2002, pls. IV.1–3) and an early commentary (Schmithausen 2002, pls. XIII.1–3) dating from the end of the Kuṣāṇa period to the beginning of the Gupta period, or the slightly later Bairam Ali manuscripts. Such spaces can also be found in some of the oldest Indian inscriptions, e.g. the Aśoka pillar inscription in Lumbini. Later, in subsequent manuscript copies, the spaces have been removed, although punctuation marks have not necessarily been inserted.

part of the reader. The less familiar he is with an archaic text, the more difficulties he will have to understand its contents. Herein most certainly also lies one of the problems that scribes of the 8<sup>th</sup> century had to face.

## 8 Historical aspects

A specific characteristic of the *Dirghāgama* manuscript is its numerous scribal errors. They possibly hint to historical factors. The manuscript was surely never read, and the string holes look new and unused. Like most manuscripts of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda tradition from Gilgit and Central Asia, it has no colophon specifying donors.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the manuscript cannot be related to the “cult of the book” of Mahāyāna Buddhism, or the related “business” of manuscript production. Many of the later manuscripts of famous Mahāyāna texts, such as the *Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, were proofread many times and meticulously corrected, as can be seen in many manuscripts from Eastern India dating mostly from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards. It is likely that our manuscript of the *Dirghāgama* was a copy meant for the book shelf of a (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda monastery, and that it was presumably not intended to be used in connection with a curriculum. There are also other indicators that the literature of the Āgamas did not enjoy widespread popularity in the religious life of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda texts are largely missing in Eastern India, although from inscriptions it is known that the Mūlasarvāstivādins resided there. In all probability, the decision of the Tibetans to translate only the Vinaya and not the Āgamas is based on the relative importance these texts had in India at the time. The Āgama texts were no longer urgently needed.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> See Sander 1988, 534. The *vinaya* text from Bairam Ali (SI Merv 1) is an exception in this respect: The Sarvāstivāda patron named Mitraśreṣṭhin wishes his own benefit as well as that of others, and he also hopes that the ignorance of the scribe will perish. As seen in the published photograph, the text reads: *likhāvitam mitraśreṣṭhinā vinayaddharena sarvvastivādina atmahita:parahitāya : namo sarvvabuddhāna || yenāyam likhata śāstraṃ tasya ajñānaprahānaya bhavatu ||* \* || (folio 21v2–4; cf. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya 1999–2000 (part 5), 15, fig. 4; *Das Lo-tossutra und seine Welt*, cat. 29). Hartmann (2004b, 127, n. 21) has observed that this is the only example of a Sarvāstivāda text in which the name of the school is mentioned.

<sup>64</sup> Although a Tibetan translation of the *Dirghāgama* is mentioned in the *dBa bzhed* (Wangdu et al., 2000, 89), not a trace of it has been found. A late example for the interest in the *Dirghāgama* is testified by the *Abhidharmakośaṭīkopāyikā* of the Nepalese scholar Śamathadeva (Zhi gnas lha). The commentary, which is only preserved in Tibetan translation, abounds with quotations from the Āgamas, including the *Dirghāgama*. It therefore represents a rich source for Āgama texts, which often lack an Indic original. However, many passages in the Tibetan translation are

In conclusion it may be said that even though the condition of the text as preserved in the *Dirghāgama* manuscript occasionally causes difficulties for an editor, it represents a valuable witness that testifies to the interplay of problems inherited through the texts' transmission, the astonishing working methods of the scribes, as well as some historical aspects such as the lack of interest on the Indian subcontinent of the 8<sup>th</sup> century in Āgama literature. In addition, we have gained some interesting insights into palaeographical matters concerning manuscripts from the greater Gilgit area of this period.

## Appendix I: Inscriptions from the greater Gilgit region containing numerals of the place-value system<sup>65</sup>

1. Metal image of a Buddha in *dharmacakrapravartanamudrā* from the year 70 (𑖀𑖄), Aśvayuja śu di 5 (𑖀), donated by Ratnacitti.<sup>66</sup> Fussman has read “8” instead of “5”, probably because of the similarity with the 8 of the old system of addition; however, in comparison with all examples from the new system, 5 seems more likely.
2. Metal image of a Buddha in *varadamudrā* from the year 92 (𑖀𑖄𑖀), Bhādrapada śu di 14 (𑖀𑖄𑖀), donated by Veyatyāsa (after von Hinüber).<sup>67</sup> The reading of the 4 is not certain because with the loop on the right side it differs from all known forms.
3. Stone inscription in Hatun from the year 47 (𑖀𑖄), Pauṣya śukla 13 (𑖀𑖄).<sup>68</sup>

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incomprehensible. The numerous corruptions may be due in part to misunderstandings on the part of the translators; many seem to have originated in the Sanskrit manuscript used for the translation, or even in the original work of the author (including incorrect titles). See Melzer 2010, 315–317.

<sup>65</sup> It is generally assumed that the given date represents the Laukika era, even though it is not explicitly named. In the dates of this era, the hundreds and thousands are usually not mentioned. Dating is therefore based on the interpretation of palaeographic and stylistic characteristics.

<sup>66</sup> September 594, after Fussman. Cf. Paul 1986, 172–190, pl. 83; Fussman 1993, 29–31, no. 6.2, pls. 18–22.

<sup>67</sup> August 616, after Fussman, 716, after Siudmak. Cf. Fussman 1993, 31–32, no. 6.3, pl. 23–27; von Hinüber 2004, 151–152; Siudmak 2013, 329–330, pl. 150.

<sup>68</sup> 19 December 671, after C. Vogel in von Hinüber. Cf. Fussman 1993, 4–19; von Hinüber 2004, 48–52, Nr. 22, Abb. 18–19. Line 5 of the inscription contains the number 32 000.



4. Metal image of a crowned Buddha in *dharmacakrapravartanamudrā* from the year 54 (𑖦𑖩), donated by Surabhi.<sup>69</sup>
5. Metal image of a Buddha in *samādhimudrā* seated between two *stūpas*, from the year 55 (𑖦𑖩), donated by Śākyabhikṣu Bhadradharma.<sup>70</sup>
6. Stone inscription in Danyor from the year 62 (𑖦𑖩), Phalguna *śu di* 2 (𑖦𑖩).<sup>71</sup>
7. Rock inscription of Rājaputra Tārama (Hodar South) from the year 68 (𑖦𑖩), Mārgaśīrṣa *śu di* 14 (𑖦𑖩).<sup>72</sup>
8. Metal image of a Maitreya from the year 82 (𑖦𑖩), donated by Śāmāvatī, now at the Jo khang in Lhasa.<sup>73</sup>
9. Metal image of a crowned Buddha in *dharmacakrapravartanamudrā* seated between two *stūpas*, from the year 90 (𑖦𑖩), Vaiśākha *śu di* 2 (𑖦𑖩), donated by Saṃkaraseṇa and his wife Devaśrī (Asia Society New York, Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3<sup>rd</sup> Collection of Asian Art, 1979.44).<sup>74</sup>
10. Metal image of a crowned Buddha in *bhūmisparśamudrā* and holding a book, from the year 90, Vaiśākha *śu di* 8, donated by Nandivikramādityanandi (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; 86.120).<sup>75</sup> The number of the day cannot be read on the published photograph.
11. Metal image of the crowned Buddha Maitreya from the year 91 (𑖦𑖩), donated by Nandivikramādityanandi (Pritzker Collection).<sup>76</sup>
12. Stone image of the “*mahāśrīvajrāsana*”, the Buddha in *bhūmisparśamudrā* in the Māravijaya episode, from the year 95 (𑖦𑖩), Vaiśākha *śukla* 15 (𑖦𑖩),

<sup>69</sup> 678/9, after von Hinüber. Cf. von Hinüber 2004, 168–169, Abb. 35.

<sup>70</sup> 679/80 or 779/80, after von Hinüber; quoted in von Schroeder. Cf. von Schroeder 2001, 114–115, no. 22A–B.

<sup>71</sup> 19 February 687, after C. Vogel in von Hinüber. Cf. von Hinüber 2004, 52–57, Nr. 23, Abb. 20–23.

<sup>72</sup> 28 November 692, after C. Vogel in von Hinüber. Cf. von Hinüber 2004, 66–68, Nr. 32A, Abb. 31.

<sup>73</sup> 706/7, after von Hinüber. Cf. Henss 1996, 61, fig. 9; von Schroeder 2001, 176–180, no. 52A–D; von Hinüber 2003, 36–37, fig. 3; von Hinüber 2004, 31–36, Nr. 12, Abb. 4; Siudmak 2013, 312–314, pl. 143.

<sup>74</sup> 20 April 714, after C. Vogel in von Hinüber 2004. Cf. Pal 1975, 106–107, pls. 30a, b; von Schroeder 1981, 118–119, no. 16B; Fussman 1993, 43–47, no. 6.6, pl. 31; Reedy 1997, 157–158, K50; Pal 2003, 106–107, no. 63; Huntington/Bangdel 2003, 84–85, no. 9; von Hinüber 2003, 37, fig. 4; von Hinüber 2004, 39–40, 154–156, Nr. 15, Abb. 6; Siudmak 2013, 317–319, pl. 145 (mirror image!).

<sup>75</sup> 26/27 April 714, after C. Vogel in von Hinüber. Cf. Pal 1975, 108–109, pl. 31; von Schroeder 1981, 118, no. 16C; Postel/Neven/Mankodi 1985, 86, 252–254, figs. 103, 411 (only here are all the faces of the inscription published); Fussman 1993, 39–43, no. 6.5, pl. 30; von Hinüber 2004, 38–39, 153–154, Nr. 14, Abb. 5; Siudmak 2013, 315–317, pl. 144.

<sup>76</sup> 23 April 715, after von Hinüber. See Pal 2003, 108–109, no. 64 (mirror image!); von Hinüber 2003, 37–39, fig. 5; von Hinüber 2004, 40–42, 156–158, Nr. 16, Abb. 7; Siudmak 2013, 319–322, pl. 146.

donated by Sukhavarman (National Museum, New Delhi, inv. 82.4a).<sup>77</sup> This new reading of the date is the result of comparing the numerals with the other examples listed in table 3, and appears to be more satisfying than the reading for the year as 5 (Fussman) or 15 (Paul).

13. Metal image of a Buddha in *dharmacakrapravartanamudrā*, donated by Ratnapālasvāmi (George Ortiz Collection).<sup>78</sup> The weight of the image is incised on the pedestal, namely *pala* 55 (𑖦𑖧).
14. Metal image of the Buddha Viśvabhū in *dharmacakrapravartanamudrā* from the year 99 (𑖧𑖧), donated by the Śākyaabhiṣu Acintamitra and Vīryamitra.<sup>79</sup>
15. Metal image of a Buddha in *dharmacakrapravartanamudrā* (Dangkhar Monastery) from the year 88 (𑖧𑖨), *mārgaśīrṣa* śu di 15 (𑖧𑖩), donated by Vikavarman.<sup>80</sup>

## Appendix II: Towards a more precise definition of GB 2/PŚ in manuscripts

In the Gilgit region, the script GB2/PŚ became widespread in the latter half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Navasurendrādityanandi.<sup>81</sup> Most probably, from the beginning it included the new shapes for the *akṣaras ya* and *ha*, which are not found in GB 1.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, even after the introduction of the new script, the old shapes of both *akṣaras* enjoyed a long life in manuscripts, especially as part of conjunct signs in the case of *ha*, and in combination with vowel diacritics in the case of *ya*. If the radiocarbon dating for the *Dirghāgama* manuscript (DĀ) can be trusted, these shapes were still being written by copyists in the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century or even later. However, their usage was dependent on the individual scribes. While some consistently wrote using the new shapes, others

<sup>77</sup> Ca. 719 CE and not 639 (Pal and Paul) or 629 (Fussman) or 729/739 (Siudmak 2013). For photographs, see, e.g., Paul 1986, 159–172, pls. 80, 80a, 80b; Siudmak 1990, figs. 1–2; Fussman 1993, 32–39, no. 6.4, pl. 28–29; Pal 2003, 92, fig. 2; Siudmak 2013, 344–351, pl. 159. Fussman has suggested reading the first numeral as the *siddham* symbol, which would make no sense between the abbreviation *saṃ* for “year” and the actual numeral.

<sup>78</sup> Weldon/Singer 1999, 38–39, pl. 3; Siudmak 2013, 272–276, pl. 126.

<sup>79</sup> 723/4 or 823/4, after von Hinüber. Cf. von Hinüber 2007, 40–41, pl. 4–5.

<sup>80</sup> 712, after Laurent 2013, 191. See Laurent 2013, figs. 194–197, 200–201.

<sup>81</sup> For details, see notes 8, 10.

<sup>82</sup> The Hatun inscription is one of the earliest datable witnesses of the new shapes (von Hinüber 2004, 48–52, Nr. 22, Abb. 18, dated to 671 CE), as are the protective charms for Navasurendrādityanandi (von Hinüber 2004, 14–16, Nr. 4a–c, Abb. 1–2).

occasionally copied the old shapes. Therefore, alone the presence of these old forms offers no help in deducing a more precise dating, unless the entire manuscript contains only these forms.<sup>83</sup>

The script has a calligraphic variant, which is usually found in religious manuscripts. A more cursive style of everyday writing is encountered in inscriptions (on stone and metal images) and sometimes also in manuscripts, in particular in additions, colophons and non-religious texts.<sup>84</sup>

In the calligraphic variant, two sub-groups can be distinguished. The first one, which I call Type A, is represented by most Gilgit manuscripts written in GB 2/PŚ, most notably the *Vinayavastvāgama* and the DĀ. The second one (Type B) differs from Type A in its more fluid appearance. The most obvious difference concerns the subscribed -y-, which stays at the bottom of the upper consonant sign in Type A (𑖦 cya, 𑖦 tyā), but in Type B is sometimes elongated on the right side and drawn at the top of the (upper) consonant sign (𑖦 cya, 𑖦 tyā).<sup>85</sup> In a few manuscripts, the vowel diacritic is attached to the -y- instead of the upper consonant sign (𑖦 vyo, 𑖦 syā).<sup>86</sup> This characteristic is very common, e.g., in eastern Indian Siddhamāṭṭkā documents. Type B may only have flourished for a relatively short period in Gilgit, since it had no impact on the later development of Śāradā script. Both types (A and B) are found in all regions where GB 2/PŚ was used: Gilgit, Afghanistan, as well as for a few manuscripts from Central Asia.

A latest time limit for GB 2/PŚ has not yet been clearly defined, because no single manuscript has been discovered that is safely datable to the 9<sup>th</sup> century. However, a birch-bark codex from Kashmir that is preserved in the Tibet Museum in Lhasa may offer a clue.<sup>87</sup> It contains several tantric texts by different authors,

<sup>83</sup> In a *mahārakṣā* added at the end of the *Hayagrīvaśāstra* that is written entirely in GB 1, the scribe, who has a preference for the old variants, writes old and new forms directly next to each other (Ser. no. 33b, GBM 2459–2460; see von Hinüber 2014, 104). For an example from the Schøyen Collection with only old forms of ya (MS 2381/57; the text on the other side is written in GB 1!), see Hartmann 2002b, 314, 318–319; Sander 2007, 131, 137, fig. 3.

<sup>84</sup> For the more cursive variant, see the above-mentioned protective charms for Navasuren-drādityanandi and the added *mahārakṣā* at the end of the *Hayagrīvaśāstra*, a section in a *Kārmavācanā* collection (ser. no. 3; GBM 67–68, folio 42r7-v; see von Hinüber 1969, 103, 125–131), *Annapānaśāstra* (a medical text; ser. no. 20; GBM 1708–1713), *Dārikāgāthās* (ser. no. 53; GBM 3229–3263) and the Bhakshshāli manuscript (a mathematical text).

<sup>85</sup> See the *Ekottarikāgama* (Ser. no. 4a; GBM 93–128) and the *Dharmaskandha* (Ser. no. 5; GBM 151–156).

<sup>86</sup> See a *Prātimokṣasūtra* and *Kārmavācanā* (Ser. no. 4b and d; GBM 129–150) and the *Viśvantarāvādāna* (Ser. no. 8; GBM 1332–1349, 3314–3315).

<sup>87</sup> I am grateful to Kazuo Kano, Alexis Sanderson, and Christiane Kalantari who provided me information about the Lhasa manuscript as well as photographs. A few leaves are published in *Precious Deposits* 1, 113–116, no. 74, and *Tibet Museum*, 54–55, no. 1.

and at least partly, by different scribes. The second to last text contains a short colophon referring to the year 29 of the Laukika era or of the reign of Anantadeva, who may be the same Anantadeva mentioned in Kashmirian historiographical texts.<sup>88</sup> Thus, the manuscript most likely dates to the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

The script exhibits a strong similarity to the script of the DĀ, and thus the significant differences can only be detected upon a second look. In the Lhasa manuscript, the diacritic vowel sign *-ā* is always attached to the right vertical of the consonant sign (ཡ *ghrā*, ཡ *yā*, ཡ *sā*), while in the DĀ several possibilities exist (ཡ *ghrā*, ཡ *yā*, ཡ *sā*). Also in the Lhasa manuscript, a tendency for writing diacritic vowel signs at the top of consonant signs can be observed (ཀ *ke*, ཀ *ko*, མ *mo*, ཀ *kau*, ཏ *tau*, ར *rau*, ལ *lau*; DĀ: ཀ *kau*, ཏ *tau*, ར *rau*, ལ *lau*).<sup>89</sup> The *akṣara ca*, as a main consonant sign, has a much less triangular shape in the Lhasa manuscript (ཅ *ca*, ཅ *co*) than in the DĀ (ཅ *ca*, ཅ *co*). The *akṣara ṇa* appears in two variants in the Lhasa manuscript (ཎ ཎ), the latter corresponding to the shape used in the DĀ. Two different forms can also be found for the subscribed consonant sign *-th-* in the Lhasa manuscript. While one corresponds with the DĀ (Lhasa: ཐ *sthi*; DĀ: ཐ *stha*), the second form is very different (Lhasa: ཐ *ntha*, ཐ *rtha*, ཐ *stha*; DĀ: ཐ *ntha*, ཐ *rtha*, ཐ *stha*). The *akṣara la* represents an important indication for the more developed type of the script in the Lhasa manuscript (ལ; DĀ: ལ). The Lhasa manuscript only contains modern forms for *ya* (ཡ *yā*) and *ha* (ཧ), but it should not be forgotten that the manuscript does not have a very long copying history. In the Lhasa manuscript, two punctuation marks can be found that are unknown in the DĀ. One looks like a comma and stands either after a word or a word group (,).<sup>90</sup> There is also a sign that has a function similar to the double *daṇḍa* at the end of text sections (ཎ). Other differences are listed in table 4.

Finally, another interesting detail can be observed. In the Lhasa manuscript, the forms of *ba* (e.g. བ *ba*, བ *bā*, བ *bī*) and *va* (e.g. བ *va*, བ *vā*, བ *vī*) are clearly differentiated,<sup>91</sup> in contrast to the DĀ, where the two *akṣaras* cannot be distin-

<sup>88</sup> Kawasaki 2004, 50. Surprisingly there are no titles of the ruler mentioned.

<sup>89</sup> This tallies with the observations by Vogel (1911, 64) concerning a few copper plate inscriptions from Chamba of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Vogel has compared the frequency of the three possible types for writing the medial *-o* with the earlier Sarahan stone inscription (*praśasti*) from about the 10<sup>th</sup> century. According to him (ibid, 65), by the 13<sup>th</sup> century the addition of the *-o* above the main consonant sign becomes (with few exceptions) the norm in inscriptions.

<sup>90</sup> Similar marks can also be found in Nepalese manuscripts and inscriptions, however, most are from a slightly later period onwards.

<sup>91</sup> However, the difference is less obvious in the case of the conjunct signs or in the combination of *bu/vu*. In this respect, inscriptions may differ from manuscripts. Kaul Deambi (2008, 39) did not notice differences between the two *akṣaras* in early Śāradā inscriptions of the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Earlier, he referred to a difference in the Bakhshālī manuscript (1982, 72, 85), but later

**Tab. 4:** *Akṣaras* of “Proto-Śāradā/GB2” from the *Dīrghāgama* manuscript and “early Śāradā” from the Lhasa manuscript (in italics)

[illegible]





guished from one another. Perhaps the same shape of these *akṣaras*, along with the differences of *ca* and *la*, can be regarded as important characteristics of GB 2/ PŚ when compared to the early Śāradā script of the Lhasa manuscript.

The observations gleaned from comparing the script in these two manuscripts may be useful for dating manuscripts or inscriptions that are still undated. Thus, the Bhakhshālī manuscript<sup>92</sup> is clearly nearer to the Lhasa manuscript than to the DĀ.

The date when the “real Śāradā script” made its first appearance is not exactly known. Kaul Deambi has revised his view of its beginnings lying in the 8<sup>th</sup> century based on the incorrect dating of the Hund inscription (Kaul Deambi 1992, 3, 24, 60–61),<sup>93</sup> and has shifted it to the 9<sup>th</sup> century (2008, 17, 23), referring to the Sarahan stone inscription (*praśasti*) as the earliest example. This important and long inscription, is, unfortunately, not dated. Vogel is “inclined to assign it to the 9<sup>th</sup> century” (Vogel 1911, 47), but then dates it to the 10<sup>th</sup> century (ibid, 155). The category of 9<sup>th</sup>- to 10<sup>th</sup>-century Śāradā inscriptions of Kaul Deambi (2008, 24–34) is rather blurred; it does not clearly indicate the differences to the earlier script. Most of the inscriptions referred to are not precisely dated and the longer examples are all ascribed to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Based on the dating of GB 2 by Sander (see note 10), Slaje (1993, 15) regards the 10<sup>th</sup> century as the earliest date for the Śāradā script.

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he abandoned this observation (2008, 53). The bare *akṣaras ba* or *bā*, with nothing beneath, are actually very rare (only two examples in the Bakhshālī manuscript?).

<sup>92</sup> See note 57.

<sup>93</sup> This inscription of Queen Kāmeśvarī from northern Pakistan corresponds closely to the script of the Lhasa manuscript. The reading of the date is 158 and 159, and not 168 and 169 as most scholars insist (Sahni 1938; Kaul Deambi 1982 and 2008; Agrawal 2001, 376), with the exception of N. P. Chakravarty, the editor of *Epigraphia Indica*, who added a footnote to Sahni’s edition. After the 8<sup>th</sup> century date (Sahni 1938; Kaul Deambi 1982, 3, 24, 60–61) was abandoned, it was suggested that the year refers to the “Śāhi era” of 850 CE (see Agrawal 2001, 376; Kaul Deambi 2008, 23, 35), and thus the inscription would date to ca. 1009 CE, based on the correct reading of the numerals.

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Agnieszka Helman-Ważny

# **Tibetan manuscripts: Between History and Science**

## **1 Manuscript studies and Tibetan books**

Considered as part of a world heritage, ancient books are not only vehicles for content, but also very important sources of information about technology, materials used for production, as well as the art techniques involved. There are several reasons for carrying out this study: at the micro-level, studying individual books provides us with valuable information about a particular book and possibly its provenance. However, seen from a broader perspective, examining a range of items help reconstruct the history of crafts connected with bookmaking, such as papermaking, ink production, and the art of scribing. Furthermore, the examination of each book will allow evidence to be collected on book production from all periods and regions in Tibet, thus enhancing our understanding of the role books play in Tibetan culture. In other words, this kind of material research, when performed on a sufficiently representative groups of books, will enable the history of the book in Tibet to be written. The following is a summary of the research which has been conducted to date.

In the context of library science, a manuscript is defined as any handwritten item in the collections of a library or an archive, as opposed to being printed or reproduced in some other way. In general, manuscript culture refers to the development and use of manuscripts as a means of storing and disseminating information prior to the age of printing. The history of manuscripts in the Western world may seem to have ended with the invention and proliferation of printing. Tibetans, however, continued the tradition of manuscript production even after the invention of xylography. Manuscripts were still being produced in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Tibet had become part of China and the editing process was automated. Within that timeframe, the development of book production techniques was influenced by the availability of new materials, but the basic book formats have been preserved until today.

Manuscript studies, bibliography, and the history of books are very closely related to each other. Manuscript studies overlap with and make use of such disciplines as palaeography, codicology, archaeology, papyrology, the study of book bindings, writing implements, and scribal methods. Additionally, all aspects of manuscript production, dissemination, readership, provenance, ownership, and preservation are relevant to manuscript studies.

Even though written documents play an important role in the discipline of history, there can be no doubt that important evidence comes from a variety of different sources, including artefacts and oral tradition. However, written documents such as manuscripts, printed books, or inscribed pillars, act both as documents and as artefacts, and their physical properties can be studied in much the same way as those of a sculpture, painting, or ceramic object. Thus, were one to ignore the non-linguistic aspects of manuscripts, it would deprive one of important historical evidence.

While the history of Tibetan literature has at least received some attention within Tibetan Studies, a systematic study of the physical features of manuscripts, such as format, binding style, and material composition, is unfortunately almost completely lacking, with the notable exception of Cristina Scherrer-Schaub's contributions.<sup>1</sup> I would, however, refrain from using the term "codicology" in the context of old Tibetan manuscripts. Codicology is the study of the codex, which is a bound book, and particularly the study of the physical makeup and modes of production of a given volume. Between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, the preservation of writing in the Latin world shifted from papyrus, stored in rolls, to parchment, stored in a codex, or pages bound into a book. We might say that codicology is the archaeology of the book if defined as the codex, with "archaeology" understood as the search for and interpretation of artifacts. Since the majority of Tibetan books represent the *pothi* format, a loose-leaf construction, it would be better simply to use the term "archaeology" here, especially because the term "archaeology of the book" is already used in the context of studying the history and evolution of old manuscripts and medieval book constructions.<sup>2</sup>

In any kind of study of book collections related to manuscript studies, a statistical approach is important. It is not possible to base one's conclusions only on a small group of books from a single collection, place, or owner. Although each observation is important in its own right, it still must only be regarded as part of the data as a whole, and cannot be understood as representative of all Tibetan book history. In general, more research is needed before this field can fully contribute to the reconstruction of the history of the Tibetan book.

Since Tibetan has been used as a literary language throughout a very large area and across several nations, including the Himalayan region of South Asia, the concept of nationality in the context of cultural heritage among originally nomadic people is complicated. The full geographical range in which Tibetan has

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<sup>1</sup> Scherrer-Schaub 1999, Scherrer-Schaub and Bonani 2002.

<sup>2</sup> For reference to "archaeology of the book" in medieval manuscript studies, see Szirmai 1999. However, in medieval manuscript studies both terms are used equally, as it was discussed by Gruijs 1972.

served as a language of learning, however, is even greater. With the promulgation of Tibetan Buddhism among the Mongols and Manchus, literary Tibetan became a common medium of communication among Inner Asian Buddhists by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and was used at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as far west as the Volga River flows into the Caspian Sea and as far east as Beijing. The study and use of literary Tibetan has also been revived to varying degrees in Buryatia and Tuva in the Russian Federation, among ethnic Mongols and Yi in China, and in Mongolia itself. This is why books written in Tibetan differ widely in their form and in materials used: not every community using the Tibetan language adapted all Tibetan bookmaking techniques similarly, nor did they use the same resources. In this sense, local “book culture” was often preferred.

It is often assumed that the language of a book determines its ethnic affiliation because language is a feature that distinguishes nations. But especially in Tibet and also in many other parts of Asia, language is entirely insufficient as a primary determinant. Depending on religious tradition, political situation, or cultural tradition, the culture of a book often has a multilingual character. Nevertheless Tibetan script was the most general criterion for selecting manuscripts in this study, and this criterion served as a starting point for a preliminary typology of Tibetan manuscripts features. Creating a typology of particular features, such as page layout, format, binding style and materials can then help to classify the initially large selection of books into groups and relate them to particular local book cultures. This study indicates that each of the many physical characteristics of which Tibetan books are composed might indeed lead to a variety of multicultural connections.

Present studies of Buddhist manuscripts owe much to the techniques and terminology of codicology established by earlier humanist scholars of Latin and Greek, or later also Middle Eastern languages.<sup>3</sup> A significant part of the methods and terminology can be borrowed, but not all, and not without careful consideration of the specifics of the new context. Asian manuscripts have not yet been approached from a codicological, or rather archaeological perspective, as Western manuscripts have.

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<sup>3</sup> Buddhist manuscripts studies as emerging discipline is discussed in Berkwitz / Schober / Brown 2009.

## 2 Methodology: The uneasy alliance of science and history in Tibetan manuscript studies

Until now, research on the materiality of Tibetan books has not been undertaken in a systematic manner. Furthermore, in the case of Tibetan books, the interdisciplinary character of manuscript studies gives rise to many methodological problems. The lack of clarity or consensus on methods makes methodology itself still a field of study and experimentation, without defined guidelines. Additionally, the terminology is not unified, and is often dependant on a scholar's particular background. Clearly, results obtained from scientific examination and historical record should complete and inform each other. However, to achieve such a level of communication between different disciplines is a great challenge. Historians rarely undertake scientific examinations of manuscripts, and tend to rely only on their textual content; scientists are usually not equipped with adequate knowledge of the source language and culture to be able to fully interpret the results of their analyses without the help of linguists and historians.

In fact, methods borrowed from various disciplines of both science and history, such as library science, bibliography, codicology, palaeography, material science, history of art and crafts, archeometry and archaeology, were applied for this research in an attempt to establish a preliminary typology of Tibetan manuscripts features. The first part of the investigations has always consisted of library research, selection of manuscripts and preliminary descriptions of the physical features of the manuscripts based on visual inspection, such as page outline features, book format and especially type of paper. Secondly, the genre of the book was initially recognised based on the library catalogue entry or, in the case of uncatalogued items, with the help of a regional specialist. Further palaeographical approaches allowed for comparative analyses of page outlines in different types of books with special attention to the text composition, type of script, and style of rubric and ruling.<sup>4</sup> The main purpose was to group all the books that were examined according to the features described above. It often proved helpful to link particular items to groups that had previously been identified. Moreover, it proved easier to classify particular manuscripts into categories on a visual basis than by textual content alone. Further characteristics, such as decoration, iconography and paints, were examined within the scope of my abilities.

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<sup>4</sup> In Medieval Manuscript Studies “rubric” refers to lines of text written in a different ink. Most often, but not always, red rubrics served as instructional guides to the reader, providing descriptive headings and marking divisions in the text. The term comes from Latin *rubrica* meaning red. “Ruling” refers to the horizontal lines applied to the paper to guide the scribe’s hand.

Some data was extracted by means of analytical methods such as optical microscopy, Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM), dendrochronology, etc. The fibre composition of the paper was examined by the author for most of the manuscripts described here. Material analyses were especially emphasized since they provide a wealth of information about the origin of a book, and sometimes helped date the creation of a particular piece of art or craftsmanship. In addition, material analyses often provided clues about the artist's outlook, such as whether their choice of materials was deliberate or out of necessity. The examination also included studying the paper's surface in the context of how it absorbs the ink, as well as photographic documentation of the paper structure and transparency, such as patterns of chain and laid lines on the paper sheet. In a few cases it was possible to use radiocarbon dating ( $^{14}\text{C}$ ) to determine the age of paper. Though expensive, this procedure is desirable as it provides an independent and objective method for organic materials.

A detailed list of the institutions and collections of Tibetan books that have been included in this research can be found in the appendix.

### **3 Preliminary approaches to a typology of the features of manuscripts in Tibet**

Manuscripts were produced even during the golden age of Tibetan xylograph printing in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, yet their purpose was different. Manuscripts were not intended for mass dissemination, but instead as an ornate and unique offering to the Dalai Lama or other patrons, and to gain spiritual merit. They were also quicker and cheaper to produce when only one copy was intended. The act of copying texts was regarded as highly meritorious, even more so than printing, and thus was often sponsored by various religious and political leaders. There has been always a close link between the aesthetics of book production and patronage. However, many religious texts in Tibet were also copied by nonprofessional scribes for training purposes and to gain spiritual merit for their work. Such manuscripts were usually produced and utilised by scribes as a part of their religious practice. They were intended neither for wider dissemination nor as gifts. They often contained only fragments of religious texts. Historical or administrative notes were also usually handwritten. Production of such manuscripts was cheap, in contrast to the scribal publications of Tibetan Buddhist Canon editions. Production of handwritten editions of Kanjur and Tanjur or other significant texts was a costly and laborious process in which an equally great expenditure of funds and resources was needed for every copy desired. The use of precious stones,

gold, silver and other rare minerals, as well as the application of special preparation techniques, make them more expensive than xylograph prints in the final analysis, especially if more than one copy was produced.

### 3.1 Ink and other writing substances

The material was initially divided into two groups: manuscripts written in black ink on raw paper and manuscripts written in gold ink on blue or black paper.<sup>5</sup> The first type was found in the British Library, the Asia and Pacific Museum in Warsaw, the University of Virginia Library, the Jagiellonian University Library in Cracow, and the Berlin State Library. Examples of the second type were found in the collections of the British Library, the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, the RRE private collection, the Columbia University Library, the Pomeranian Library in Szczecin, and the Asia and Pacific Museum in Warsaw.<sup>6</sup>

In both types of manuscripts, the tools for executing the base lines and for writing differ, and there are variations in the general layout of the pages as well, such as the number of text lines, the size of margins, the placement of miniatures, the decorative elements, the placement of commentary (if any) in relation to the placement of the main text, and the presence of notes by author, scribe or readers (so-called “marginalia” in Western books). Writing and painting tools have always depended on the materials that are to be inscribed. In general, changes

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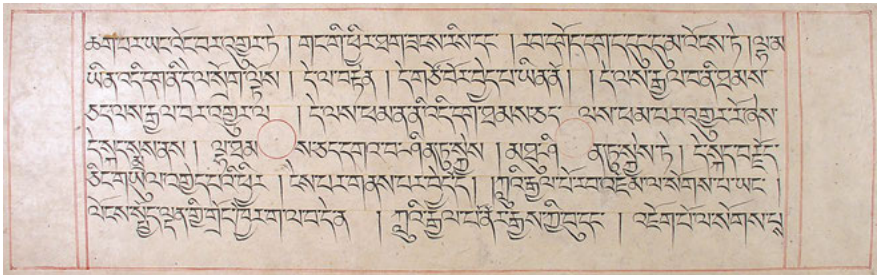
<sup>5</sup> Manuscripts written in gold are distinguished by their special decorative look. The symbolism of this special form of Tibetan craftsmanship is very strongly connected with Buddhist philosophy and Tibetan religious art. Books are also known as “gold manuscripts” since they are supposed to be written with ink made of seven precious gems and metals, mostly gold. According to a Tibetan manual for scribes, the first line of a text should be written in gold, the second one in turquoise, the third in silver, the fourth in coral, the fifth in iron, the sixth in bronze, and the seventh with material made of conch shell. The production demanded excellent artistic skills which were also considered worthy of gaining spiritual merit. Gold manuscripts are also distinguished from other manuscripts by the particular process needed for the preparation of paper and the technique of executing the text (writing tools). For further information see: Blo rdor 1990.

<sup>6</sup> The following is a list of items examined arranged according to their location: From the British Library: *Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State* (OR 15190), manuscript written in gold with Tibetan religious text brought as a gift from Bhutan in 1866 (MS 13162), Sel dkar Kanjur (OR 6724). From the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art: Illuminated cover and frontispiece of *Eight Thousand Lines Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* (Accession number: 2006.028 a,b). From Richard Ernst private collection: Illuminated cover and frontispiece of *Eight Thousand Lines Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*. From the Columbia University Library: 15<sup>th</sup> century (?) *Lotus Sutra* (Tibetan ms.6). From the Pomeranian Library in Szczecin: *Diamond Sutra* written in gold (DSB 1). From the Asia and Pacific Museum in Warsaw: *Diamond Sutra* written in gold (MAP 4323).



in technology entail other changes as well, for instance, the discovery of new writing tools revolutionised all other practices in copying manuscripts. It seems, however, that the foundation of the Tibetan art of writing, has not undergone a “revolution” since very early times.

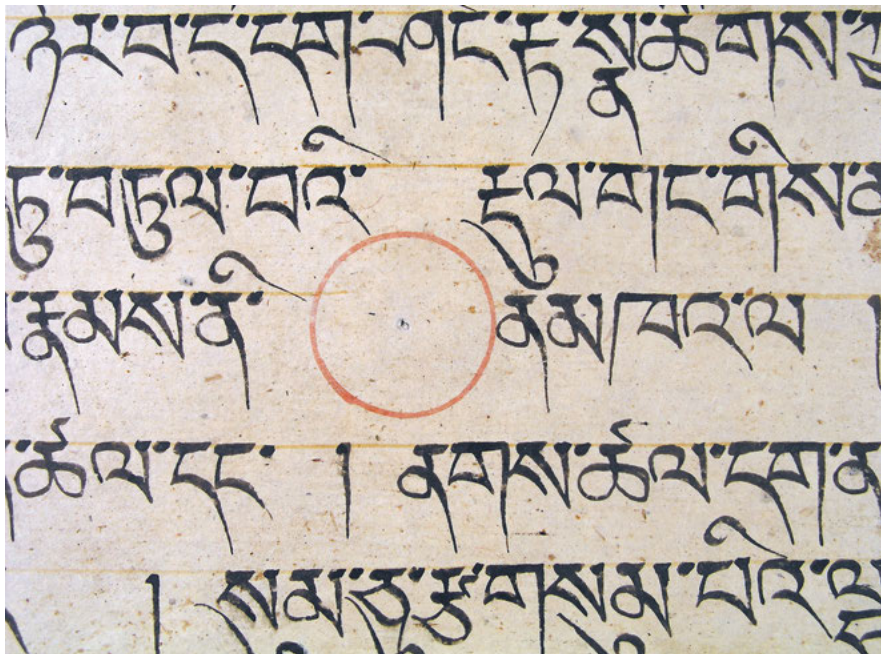
Different types of ruling, such as scribal guidelines, frames or marginal lines, were indispensable elements of the outline of Tibetan manuscript leaves (Figure 1). According to traditional procedures, in manuscripts written on raw paper, numerous lines were drawn as a base for Tibetan text using a sandalwood stick, which colours the paper yellow when wet, or with the juice of yellow cypress turmeric (*skyer shun gi khuwa*) mixed with various fragrances. For manuscripts written in gold ink, the ruling was scratched onto the paper with a sharp tool without colouring involved, as we can observe in the *Lotus Sutra* (Tib. Ms. 6, Columbia University Library) or on the frontispiece from the Herbert Johnson Museum of Art. Another type of ruling allows for text composition within a full frame, or sometimes in between side margins. In many manuscripts written in gold, these lines (or full frames) are drawn with red ink close to the edges of the paper leaf. In other cases, the same ink is used as for the text.



**Fig. 1:** Text executed on yellow scribal guidelines and composed within red-drawn frame on this page from the Tibetan Selkar Kanjur. The British Library Collection (OR 6724, vol. 56).

Another common element is the shape of circles located exactly in the places where the holes were pierced for strings in the Indian *pustaka* – those were primary to the text, which was composed out of those circled spots (Figure 2). These circles were found in some of the Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang, and also in many manuscripts dated to a period after the Dunhuang caves were sealed in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century. In ms. 6 from the Columbia University, a sharp tool was also used to create vertical lines corresponding to side margins. Furthermore, the central part of the leaf, as defined by margins, was painted with black ink in a regular, rectangular shape holding all text lines. The margins are

not coloured and thus clearly marked off from the black-inked rectangular frame containing text. The side margins vary in length from 5–6 cm, with the upper and bottom margins 3–5 cm. In the middle of the framed area, there are two circular shapes with the text arranged outside of them, made with a sharp tool. Most of the circles were redrawn with red ink, and a few have an additional silver circle inside.



**Fig. 2:** Shape of circle located where the hole in the Indian pustaka leaf usually was pierced for string binding all leaves. Text based on the yellow scribal guidelines also visible here. A detail of page from the Tibetan Selkar Kanjur. The British Library Collection (OR 6724, vol. 56).

Most of the manuscripts were written in *dbu can* script, irrespective of which group they belonged to. However, the quality and techniques of writing differ to a great extent, depending on the artistic skills of the scribes. The frontispiece from the Johnson Museum, the frontispiece from the RRE private collection and the *Sel dkar Kanjur* from the British Library are distinguished by their beautiful calligraphy. Other books begin with steady writing and later appear to decrease in quality, or sometimes fragments of a book are written sloppily. Such fragments may have been written by a different, less skilled scribe. This can be observed

in the *Diamond Sutra* from the Asia and Pacific Museum in Warsaw, written in gold. Throughout centuries, a bamboo pen was considered the best instrument for writing Tibetan. A special knife for cutting a bamboo tree to make a pen was therefore a valuable tool, regarded as equally important.

The number of text lines usually ranges from four to nine, depending on the book format and size of the letters. However, the rule for increasing the number of verses of text on the first pages was repeated in most of the manuscripts studied. In the manuscript frontispiece written in gold ink on black-inked paper from the Johnson Museum, Cornell University, the title is written in two lines on the verso page of the book cover. Three lines of text are on the recto side of the frontispiece, and eight text lines are on the verso page of the frontispiece – this suggests that the missing rest of the book may be written in eight lines of text per page.

Taking another example presumed to be from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the *Lotus Sutra* (Tibetan ms. 6) from the Columbia University Library written in golden and silver ink on a black-inked background has six text lines on the first page (recto), and seven text lines on the second page (verso). The text is written in *dbu can* script, characterised by square, relatively wide letters. This type of script is characteristic of the Tibetan printing heritage, yet most of the manuscripts under examination also used this script.

Another common element in Tibetan manuscripts is rubric, which is the special type of text marking that served as instructional guides to the reader, providing descriptive headings and marking divisions in the text. Thus, emphasis was placed on more important words in Tibetan manuscripts by using gold, silver, or red ink, or different sized letters. For example, in Tibetan ms. 6, mentioned above, fragments of text are marked with gold ink. At the beginning, each page contains gold and silver text fragments alternately, the first line starting with gold. This pattern continues every second line on the first page, and on four later leaves some words are marked off with gold. The last page has a golden triangle with words written in gold on a background with silver text lines. The rest of the manuscript was written with silver ink (Figure 3).

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century manuscript *Mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan gyi 'grel bshad theg pa chen po la 'jug pa shes bya ba* (LTWA 14459), written in *dbu med* script, there are nine lines per page. The base text lines are hardly visible, painted in a colour similar to the paper, possibly juice of cypress turmeric. Sanskrit words are marked off with red ink. Margins are clearly sketched, also in red, on the title page they measure 10–12 cm, on the other pages 2.5–4 cm, and the upper and bottom margins are 1–2 cm.



**Fig. 3:** *Lotus Sutra* (Tibetan ms. 6) Columbia University Library. 15<sup>th</sup> century.



**Fig. 4:** Front page decorated with miniatures and ornamental frames, with curtain attached above, in the Tibetan Selkar Kanjur. The British Library Collection (OR 6724, vol. 65).

Both groups of manuscripts, those written in black ink on raw paper and those written in gold on blue or black paper, often contain miniatures representing the Buddhist pantheon, usually related to the text or to the patron's preferences. Sometimes they were painted directly on the written page, sometimes they were



attached later to the frontispiece and mounted together with many independent elements, such as particular layers, curtains or additional paper frames. This can be observed in the London *Sel dkar Kanjur* or in the Johnson Museum's frontispiece (Figure 4). In this case, a sharp tool was also used to create vertical and horizontal lines corresponding to side margins, and to designate the space for the subsequent addition of miniatures. Furthermore, the typical ornament occurring in manuscripts is a variation of an endless knot. This type of ornament can be seen in almost all gold manuscripts in this study and also a few others written in black ink.

### 3.2 Book format and bookbinding

An important feature for typology is the book format and bookbinding style. Traditional Tibetan books are designated by more than one term (*dpe cha*, *glegs bam* or *deb thar*), the content and form being directly inspired by the traditional Indian palm-leaf books called *grantha* or later *pustaka*. Preliminary research based on descriptions of Tibetan book formats and binding styles in existing objects has shown that most Tibetan books, regardless of textual content, were in the *pothi* format, which consists of loose leaves, with each leaf being made up of several layers of paper glued together, covered with boards made of wood, or layers of paper joined with strips made of paper or leather (Figure 5).

It should be noted that the term 'bookbinding' is understood as the process of physically assembling a book from a number of folded or unfolded sheets of paper or other material. It reflects a general qualification for the variation between different copies of the same edition of a book cased in publisher's cloth, whether those variations involve the book structure, colour, fabric, lettering, or decoration.<sup>7</sup> It is a little tricky to define binding variants when dealing with loose-leaf books, particularly because it is rare that all binding elements are preserved. Elements of binding for the Tibetan *pothi* format include: stock of leaves, fabric cover, labels and covers. Since most parts of this type of binding are separate and easy to replace, loose-leaf book construction can pose limitations to the unification of the binding style.

However, elements of *pothi* binding still have some variety, such as different covers, curtains, and frontispieces, and also vary according to the presence or absence of those elements. Covers can be made of wood or paper, veneer with textile, or metal fitting. Some of the covers have silk curtains covering minia-

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7 For further explanation, see Carter / Barker 2004, 41.



**Fig. 5:** Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State (*bar do thos grol*), often called the Tibetan Book of the Dead, The British Library (OR 15190).

tures, similar to the coverings of *thangkas*. For example, in the *Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State (bar do thos grol)*, often called the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* in Western popular literature, from the British Library (OR 15190), the upper cover is made of a wooden plank, wrapped in paper dyed with indigo and glued to the cover with a top layer of silk. The same cover is carved and painted on the inside, with two silk respect-curtains attached to the top. The plank is made of softwood cut radially with a finished surface.

A different type of cover was found in the Herbert Johnson Museum of Art. This cover measures 18–18,5 cm × 68,7 cm, and is made of layered paper joined together with leather strips. A green silk curtain was attached to the upper part of the cover (Figure 6). The paper sheets were never glued together, instead mounted with leather or paper strips. Aside from the cover and frontispiece, all other leaves of the book are missing. However, it is clear that the manuscript was composed of loose leaves and it is very possible that the book had an additional wooden cover, since that was typical in this type of manuscript, which was made as a special offering or gift.





**Fig. 6:** Illuminated cover and frontispiece of *Eight Thousand Lines Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* (Accession number: 2006.028a, b). The Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University.

As previously mentioned, the majority of the objects in these collections are in a loose-leaf format, but in a variety of sizes. Tibetan scribes did alter the size of the page, largely because they were using materials different from palm leaves. The sizes range from very small *pothi* books similar in proportions to palm leaves, to quite large volumes of Kanjur measuring 73.2 cm × 26.8 cm, as is the case with the ‘Handwritten Kanjur of Berlin’ acquired in 1889 by von Brandt (Peking-Kanjur), handwritten in black and red ink, and preserved in the Berlin State Library, measuring 73.2 cm × 26.8 cm.

Many other examples of Tibetan binding styles, such as scrolls, concertina or bound books (boarded, stitched booklets) were seen in the collections of the British Library, the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives and the Tibetan Museum in Lhasa.

A couple of scrolls were found among the Dunhuang collection. The concertina form of the book was found in the British Library (MS 13092), and many other examples are in the Jagiellonian University Library, located in the part of

the collection called Pander A. In the bound books, a variety of kinds of mounting (folding and division of leaves into quires), sewing, and arrangements could be found. The common viewpoint among many researchers is that very few bound books exist in Tibet, and most of them are thought to be recent. However, some sewn books written in Tibetan exist all over the world and are dated from the about the 10<sup>th</sup> century to the present. The possible origin of binding techniques, as well as terminology for them, have to be discussed. One possibility is that this type of binding was derived from Persian origins. This form is called *deb ther* in Tibetan, possibly from the Persian *daftar*, bound at the top and largely made for official, chancellery purposes.<sup>8</sup> For example, the Tibetan Pharmacy from the Ethnographic Museum in Cracow consists of two manuscripts. One of them is a medical treaty in the *pothi* form, and the second one is a register of drugs in the form of a sewn book. Another interesting observation is that this type of book can also be written in gold, as is the case with a gold manuscript containing Tibetan religious text from the collection of the British Library (MS 13162). This manuscript of 42 leaves measuring 18,5 cm × 7,5 cm × 2 cm was brought as a gift from Bhutan in 1866. It is a stitched book composed of three sections, the middle covered with cloth and the sides covered with silk. Three sections covered separately before sewing make up the spine of this manuscript (Figure 7).



**Fig. 7:** Manuscript written in gold with Tibetan religious text brought as a gift from Bhutan in 1866. The British Library (MS 13162).

### 3.3 Writing support

When Tibetans chose paper as the support for their scriptures, two other materials with stronger roots in Indian Buddhist tradition had already existed – birch

<sup>8</sup> Persian *daftar* is understood as a collection of written leaves or sheets (forming a book for registration); hence ‘a register of accounts’; a ‘register of soldiers or pensioners’; a ‘register of the rights or dues of the State, or relating to the acts of government, the finances and the administration’; also any book, and especially a collection of the poems of some particular poets. See: <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_English\\_words\\_of\\_Persian\\_origin#D](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_English_words_of_Persian_origin#D)>

bark and palm leaves. Birch bark was available across the Himalayas and was especially favoured by Kashmiris. It was known to and used by the Tibetans from at least the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>9</sup> There is a book written on birch bark in the form of a bound book with a leather cover, which resembles the Kashmiri or Arabic style. According to the exhibition in the Tibetan Museum in Lhasa, this book dates to the time of *Srong btsan sgam po* (7<sup>th</sup> century). The book was not available for closer examination; however, taking into consideration its form and binding style, it must be a much later copy of the aforementioned text.

The paper support of manuscripts is one of the most important physical features which can serve as a distinguishing mark and help provide information about the origin of a manuscript, or furthermore its purpose and significance. Therefore, the documentation of paper features in manuscripts is one of the most crucial aspects of typology. In some cases, the identification of materials (resources) and their origin can even directly result in much quicker classification of manuscripts than translation of their textual content, since the examination of paper or other materials is an independent and objective source of information about a book. Here, I propose a combination of three levels of criteria for a typology of Tibetan paper: the raw material used, the type of papermaking mould, and the preparation of the leaves before writing.

Identifying raw material used for paper production can help identify the paper's origin. When comparing the results of fibre analyses of ancient books with the location of occurrence of the same plant, we can obtain information about the book's possible region of origin.<sup>10</sup> The area suggested by plant occurrence can be critically evaluated by other sources of information, such as textual content, layout of page and manuscript form. In this manner, the examination of these features can help determine whether or not the book originates from the same area or region that is understood to be its cultural context. For example, the key question for studying the fibre composition of papers in manuscripts found in Dunhuang and preserved in the British Library was about the beginning of Tibetan papermaking, the date of which has only been assumed until now. In addition to ramie, paper mulberry, and hemp fibres, mostly components of rag paper, which represent forty-one samples from the Dunhuang manuscripts, the *Thymelaeaceae* family plant fibres were also identified.<sup>11</sup> The oldest manuscripts written on paper made of the *Thymelaeaceae* family plants were dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> century. This supports the view that Tibetans were able to make paper by the 9<sup>th</sup> century at the latest and they apparently utilised this type of plant – which widely

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<sup>9</sup> Reynolds 1991, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Helman-Ważny 2009b.

<sup>11</sup> Helman-Ważny 2009b.

occurs in the Himalayas – as raw material for technology invented and practiced by Chinese communities.

The paper of the manuscript from the Johnson Museum was most likely glued into layers using starch paste and painted with black ink. Due to the painted black ink layer and surface preparation, it was not possible to see the paper structure clearly, which is why the type of papermaking mould could not be identified. Fibre composition analysis shows that paper mulberry fibres were used for making this paper. This suggests that the paper was definitely handmade. However, paper mulberry fibres are not typical for Tibetan books and were used in China rather than in Tibet. This may suggest that very fine paper could have been imported for making this manuscript.

The second criterion allows for a typology regarding differences in technology. Here, handmade woven paper (with a print of textile sieve), handmade laid paper (with a print of chain and laid lines left by the papermaking mould), and machine made paper can be distinguished according to the type of papermaking mould used. Since we generally know the geographic range in which the particular type of mould was used and the differences in sheet formation technology that occur, we can determine the region of a book's origin on the basis of this identification. All aforementioned paper supports were identified during this study. There were books containing paper sheets that had been made by adhering together two to ten layers of handmade woven or laid paper. Books written on woven paper, such as most of the *Sel dkar Kanjur*, were usually composed of two to four layers of paper glued together. This type of paper was usually made of plants from the *Thymeleaceae* family. Books written on the Chinese type of laid paper, made using a movable type of mould, characterized by its thin and even structure, usually contained more than five layers of paper. This was necessary because such a thin type of paper could not be used as a one-layered sheet to produce the thicker leaf required for a large format, as the Tibetan Kanjur volumes usually are. The Berlin manuscript Kanjur from the Berlin State Library is written on this Chinese type made of many layers. There were also objects made up of single-layer leaves, usually machine-made paper originated in Russia. Many examples of Russian-type machine-made paper can be seen in the Asia and Pacific Museum in Warsaw.<sup>12</sup> One-third of the Polish collection of Tibetan books was written on single-layer leaves, mostly machine-made paper sheets. Some of the Tibetan books contained both types of leaf preparation, with a vastly different number of paper layers within the same book. For example, in the collection of the Asia and Pacific Museum in Warsaw, it was possible to single out three kinds

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<sup>12</sup> This type of paper is described in detail in the article: Helman-Ważny 2007.

of paper supports: seventeen examples were of handmade woven paper, thirty were handmade laid paper, and thirty-six were machine-made paper. Such a proportion is characteristic for 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century papers.

The third level of criteria for the preparation of the leaves includes the construction of the leaf and the visual properties of its surface, such as dying the paper or exposing it to insect-repellent substances (which might change the colour of raw paper), as well as sizing the paper, gluing it in layers and polishing its surface. As a general rule, more precious and better quality manuscripts were written on more heavily processed paper. Thus, the paper for a Tibetan traditional manuscript sponsored by wealthy patrons usually has been highly processed. This includes methods such as sizing and polishing, drawing numerous lines as a base for Tibetan text using a sandalwood stick, drawing a frame with red ink on the edges of the paper, and in the end, properly executing a text.

### 3.4 Dating and regional origin

One objective of the research undertaken here is to determine the origin and provenance of every object. Provenance may designate either the place of origin of a manuscript or the various places where the manuscript has been preserved. It is best used to designate the place of origin or the single earliest known place of preservation. The study of the material and physical history of books and, in more practical terms, the identification of similarities between particular volumes with a focus on identifying the scriptoria (e.g. monasteries) that produced them, can help locate the book in a place and time. The same is true of the history of readers and reading, and of literary tastes: who reads or collects which books, and why? This can sometimes be determined through marks of ownership in books.

It should be emphasized that there are many books without any chronological information in the text or colophon that would help allocate them to a certain place or period. In such cases, the best results again can be obtained by creating a typology of particular features. For example, the identification of Tibetan calligraphy can provide a very helpful indication of its time of origin, since some calligraphies were only used within a certain timeframe. However, our knowledge of calligraphies and when they were used is not sufficient. Routine art-historical methods seem to be less effective for books. Miniatures and ornaments occurring in Tibetan manuscripts have usually been painted by Buddhist monks according to the same formal rules, or even stencils, that they have always followed, and they are never signed by the artist. There is also no clear chronology of painting styles for them that could be used as a reference. On the other hand, iconography

and painting styles can suggest the Buddhist tradition, and further provide hints to the region of origin.

There is no doubt that the material composition provides a good source of information for determining the authenticity of Tibetan books. As previously mentioned, comparing the fibre composition of the paper with the areas of the plant's regional distribution can give information about the book's origin. The composition of pigments, along with other media analyses, can also help if one traces this historically and compares it with the dates when new methods came into use in the history of the craft, such as papermaking and ink making. The chemical composition of the ink can be useful in dating a document when compared to the regional history of changes in inks and paints. The results found regarding the optical characteristics of the paper, fibre composition, presence of glue or paste in the paper, or the analyses of pigments and other media could also be supported by dendrochronology of wooden covers and radiocarbon dating.

Book covers are also potential sources of information, but a loose-leaf construction can pose limitations. To draw clues from the covers, first of all we have to be sure that they are truly part of the book. For example, a 17<sup>th</sup> century handwritten London *Sel dkar Kanjur* in the British Library, brought to England by the Younghusband expedition, contains covers that seem properly suited in size at first sight, yet the application of the lacquer and gold decorations was slightly less careful than the technique used for the book leaves. Accordingly, wood identification showed that the covers were made of tropical wood indigenous to India, not Tibet. Such wood was usually not transported over long distances. However, in this case the wood was brought to Tibet from a quite distant area. Thus, taking into consideration a difference in the quality of the book leaves and the covers, one can assume that the covers were made later than the book leaves and possibly added by one of the previous owners, or even ordered by Younghusband just before all the books were sent to England via India.

A good example of gleaning clues about dating and origin is the *Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State (bar do thos grol)* from the British Library. This is a Tibetan manuscript produced on Chinese-type paper, with a fibre composition based on paper mulberry/ramie, straw and possibly bamboo. Those were the most popular raw materials for papermaking and also typical components for *xuan* paper. This type of paper, featuring narrow distances in between laid lines, was made by hand with a movable type of mould with a fine, narrow bamboo sieve. It shows a thin layer of paper use and was dyed indigo by a dipping technique – all these characteristics suggest that the paper is of Chinese origin. On one side, a natural colour margin is left (1.5 cm) – the place for a finger to grip while pulling the paper through the dyeing solution (Figure 8). The book was not dated, but the 18<sup>th</sup> century was deduced from the text. The wooden book cover



was analyzed using a non-destructive method of measuring the rings. Preliminary results of dendrochronological analyses suggest that the book cover could originate from East Tibet due to its similarity to the chronology of that region.<sup>13</sup> Radiocarbon dating shows the last 300 years plateau on the calibration line, but with the highest probability of originating within the time spans of 1680–1770 or 1800–1940.



**Fig. 8:** Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State (bar do thos grol), often called the Tibetan Book of the Dead, The British Library (OR 15190).

Another example is the frontispiece and cover from the manuscript in the Herbert Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University. The style of clothing and hair decorations suggest that the manuscript comes from the western part of Tibet. Additionally, the style of painting (colours, red outline drawing technique) is similar to those which we can observe in murals of the Tsaparang Monastery in western Tibet (Guge Kingdom). The next clue is that the Johnson Museum folios are very similar to the book cover (with the same Sanskrit title, but spelled differently) and a frontispiece of a gold manuscript from the RRE collection described in a modern catalogue<sup>14</sup> and dated to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century from Guge, western Tibet. However, this similarity suggests that both manuscripts should be very carefully checked,

<sup>13</sup> Tomasz Wazny 2009, personal communication.

<sup>14</sup> Pal 2003, 158–159, 290.

since they may have been painted by the same workshop, using the same stencils. One may as well be a repetition of the other, since some parts are identical but others are related only in general style. They might also be from different volumes of the same set of *Prajnaparamita* manuscripts.

## 4 Conclusions

This preliminary research on manuscripts written in Tibetan shows the great potential of the “archaeology of books” but also a need to expand the group of manuscripts to be examined. The descriptions of particular objects has resulted in the standardisation of terminology and the concept of a catalogue form, expanded with the results of material examination.

Overall, I have examined more than two hundred manuscripts from a variety of collections. I have prepared brief descriptions of physical features of these manuscripts. The pieces of information gathered for every manuscript will serve as a reference for further study and will help in the classification of unknown manuscripts. Furthermore, on the long term, once a sufficiently representative group of these particular types of manuscripts have been examined, I expect to gain the knowledge of the model typology, which will allow manuscripts to be classified by specific features and relate them to particular regional origins. This should be possible as soon as we know the form which different type of texts usually take in a given place or region of Tibet, or even in a particular monastery.

The documented forms of Tibetan manuscripts have showed a relationship between functions served by particular book formats and the utility of these books. This can be observed when one compares the text content and format of loose-leaf *pothi* books to those that were sewn. Furthermore, devotional and religious purposes highly influenced the form and quality of Tibetan manuscripts because of the intent to gain spiritual merit. Furthermore, generally speaking, manuscripts can be divided into the categories of cheap simple books written by nonprofessional scribes for their own purposes and very precious collections of books, such as scribal publications of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon sponsored by wealthy people. The division between manuscripts written in gold and in black ink can be superimposed on the previous two categories. A further analysis of the relationship between the book form and its utility could contribute to a better understanding of legal and social roles that manuscripts play in Tibet, and also explain the survival of the manuscript culture after the invention of the printing press. The coexistence of manuscripts and prints in Tibet until the 20<sup>th</sup> century is very significant within Tibetan culture, and cannot easily be explained without

thorough study of Tibetan books in the wider context of the transmission of printing technology from China westward. Printed books, being cheaper and widely disseminated, are incomparable with precious works distributed in manuscript copies.

The identification of fibre composition and other technological features of paper help answer some questions about the origin, trade and import of paper and manuscripts in Central Asia. Much more research needs to be done in order to achieve a higher precision of regional estimation. However, without a doubt, this preliminary study confirms that results of paper examination give independent evidence and contribute to the knowledge of the history of crafts related to book production. Based on the examination of paper in Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang, it was possible to estimate a date for the beginning of paper-making in Tibet. In the same way, a book can be dated by collecting information derived from all possible sources for the purpose of creating a typology, or by independent scientific methods, such as radiocarbon dating and dendrochronology for wooden covers.

The preliminary typology of Tibetan manuscripts described in this article suggests the existence of “local book cultures”, and goes beyond the simple division between Tibetan and Chinese papers which is presently used.

## Appendix: Collections of Tibetan manuscripts under study

The following institutions and their collections of Tibetan books were examined for this study:

- 1 Asia and Pacific Museum in Warsaw, surveyed 1997–2005. This museum possesses the largest collection of traditional Tibetan books in Poland. Initially, most of the museum’s holdings came from the private collection of Andrzej Wawrzyniak, a Polish diplomat and sailor who later became director of the museum. The collection comprises a variety of different book types brought chiefly from Mongolia and Nepal, and provides a good selection of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century books written in the Tibetan language. 60 books were selected for detailed research and elaborated in a monograph.<sup>15</sup>
- 2 Pomeranian Library in Szczecin, surveyed 2002–2003. This collection is associated with the Buddhist Book Project Poland, which has established a very

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<sup>15</sup> Helman-Ważny 2009a.

good library and possesses many reprints. For the present study, one manuscript was chosen for detailed examination.<sup>16</sup>

- 3 Ethnographic Museum in Cracow, surveyed 2002–2005. This museum possesses a very small collection of Tibetan books. However, an interesting and unique object, the *Tibetan Pharmacy*, was located there and chosen for research. It is one of the earliest Tibetan artefacts in Poland. It was purchased and brought to Poland by Witold Swiatopełk-Mirski, donated to the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cracow by Prof. Julian Talko-Hryniewicz in 1908 and later transferred to the museum in 1921. The *Tibetan Pharmacy* contains 2 handwritten books and additionally almost 300 medications with descriptions, each contained in separate bottles and sacks. It is one of the largest collections of Tibetan drugs from the 19<sup>th</sup> century preserved in Europe.<sup>17</sup>
- 4 Jagiellonian University Library in Cracow, which has fortunately preserved the Pander collection, originally from the Berlin State Library, surveyed since 2002. It contains a collection of Tibetan texts that was thought to have been lost during World War II. Within the Pander Pantheon catalogue, I identified the *Wanli Kanjur* as well as other fragments of different *Kanjur* editions. To this date, 60 books have been described, and 250 viewed in the context of this project, together with Marek Mejor and Thupten Kunga Chashab. The entire Pander collection comprises 865 books.<sup>18</sup>
- 5 British Library collection, surveyed since 2005. Particular books from the Stein collection were chosen for examination based on their binding diversity. Finally, 11 books were selected to illustrate different types (or styles) of Tibetan binding.<sup>19</sup> Two manuscripts were additionally chosen to represent a special form of Tibetan craftsmanship, since they were written in gold on a blue or black background.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, 47 manuscripts written in Tibetan dated to around the 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century AD and found in Library Cave 17 in Dunhuang were examined for their particular type of paper and book format. This research was conducted in connection with an IDP project at the British Library, and the results are being entered into the IDP database.

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<sup>16</sup> For more information about this manuscript, see: Helman-Ważny 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Helman-Ważny 2009a, 142–151, 192–194.

<sup>18</sup> For the history and preliminary examination of this collection, see Helman-Ważny 2009c or Mejor / Helman-Ważny / Thupten Kunga Chashab 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Books singled out to represent different styles of Tibetan binding are: 13162, MS 13092, OR 11376, OR 14727 (1–2), OR 14728, OR 15190, OR 15193, OR MS 12163, TIB CC 074, TIB CC 101, TIB CC 114–115.

<sup>20</sup> These books were 13162 and OR 15190.

- 6 Library of Tibetan Works and Archives founded by the XIV Dalai Lama of Tibet in 1970, surveyed in March 2005. This is one of the most important institutions in the world dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of Tibetan Culture. There are more than 70,000 Tibetan manuscripts and documents preserved in the library, and the collection is still expanding. The history of the collection is almost impossible to trace, because a large number of objects in it have lost their identities. It is not known where the majority were taken from and what their origin is. The purpose of my visit was a conservation survey for this collection. Additionally, three manuscripts, a couple of freelance wooden covers and a selection of administrative documents were particularly examined.<sup>21</sup> I also had the opportunity to examine writing tools and two gold manuscripts from the collection of the Tibetan Museum situated in the same building.
- 7 Tibetan Museum in Lhasa, holds one interesting object in particular: a book written on birch bark and bound with a leather cover. I considered this item for research on bookbinding styles. However, it was not accessible for closer examination.
- 8 Cornell University, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, where an illuminated cover and frontispiece, part of a manuscript written in gold on black paper, were examined.<sup>22</sup>
- 9 Columbia University Library, Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, from which five gold manuscripts were examined. They were examined for textual content by Robert Thurman. The source of the manuscripts is unclear, although they may have been among the Tibetan manuscripts transferred from the East Asian Library to Herbert Lehman American History Collections in 1980/81, kept presently by the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

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<sup>21</sup> To find more information in materials published by the library, see: *The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives* 1997. The manuscripts under study have acc. No. 14459, 14532, 23585. At the same time, about 300 historical and administrative documents were catalogued and examined by Prof Schwiegers' team of researchers from Bonn University.

<sup>22</sup> Helman-Ważny 2008.

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Sam van Schaik

# Towards a Tibetan Palaeography: Developing a Typology of Writing Styles in Early Tibet<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Introduction

The study of ancient writings, or palaeography, has been practised under that name in Europe since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Growing out of the scholars' need to read manuscripts in archaic writing styles, it developed into a historical classification of styles, and an analysis of how styles developed over time and in different places. In general the development of the field of palaeography itself has followed a trajectory which begins with the subjective description of the connoisseur and ends with precise measurement and quantitative data of the scientist.<sup>2</sup>

When we move away from European manuscripts, palaeography has a shorter history. Due to British colonial interests and archeological expeditions in India a palaeography of Indian writing developed from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onward, culminating in several important (and now standard) works that set out a typology of Indian scripts based on their form, date and geographical location.<sup>3</sup> When we come to Tibet, it may not be an exaggeration to say that the study of Tibetan palaeography has yet to come into existence. Although ancient Tibetan manuscripts and inscriptions have been available since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, study of the scripts found in these sources has been restricted to a few passing observations. Recently, Cristina Scherrer-Schaub has published some suggestions as to the outlines of a Tibetan palaeography and codicology. Her preliminary periodisation

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<sup>2</sup> The first exponent of 'modern' palaeography is often said to be Jean Mabillon (d.1707), and the discipline is sometimes thought to have peaked with the work of Jean Mallon (d.1982). However, the best example of the 'scientific' or quantitative method in modern palaeography is perhaps Gilissen's *L'expertise des écritures médiévales* (Gilissen 1973).

<sup>3</sup> The first major typological study was Georg Bühler's *Indische Palaeographie* (Bühler 1896, translated into English in 1904). Later works often take Bühler as their basis. The most comprehensive of the typological descriptions are Dani 1963 and Sander 1968. A recent summary of this material is Salomon 1998.

of three phases incorporates elements of Tibetan orthography, manuscript forms and decoration and covers the 10<sup>th</sup> century through to the 16<sup>th</sup>.<sup>4</sup>

What the study of Tibetan writing still lacks is that basic point of departure for palaeographic studies in other fields: a typology of writing styles. In the palaeography of European manuscripts, early typologies have been refined, criticised, or rejected in favour of new models. The very idea of a typological description has even been questioned. Nevertheless, this whole intellectual endeavour has been conducted on the basis of the script typologies developed by early palaeographers.<sup>5</sup> Typology is surely still the first step in establishing a serious palaeography.

A script typology has a number of applications:

- (i) On the level of immediate practical use, a fully-descriptive typology is a teaching tool for reading manuscript sources. Most of the attendees at modern palaeography workshops are historians seeking this kind of instruction.
- (ii) Different styles of writing are closely linked to different socio-economic groups, and there is also a correspondence between styles and subject-matter. Thus identification of a script type can help determine the social and historical context of a manuscript. Where styles can be localized, this can also help determine the geographical location of manuscript production.
- (iii) Through examining the morphology of styles and orthography as they develop over time, we can begin to describe the historical development of a writing system.<sup>6</sup> While interesting in itself, such a description also has a practical application in providing us with models for dating manuscripts according to writing style.

In setting out here a preliminary typology for Tibetan writing I hope to show how it can, at least potentially, be put to all of these uses.

## 1.1 The Tibetan alphabet

The Tibetan alphabet is a syllabic script, created in the mid-7th century based on the Indic Brahmi script of that period. The alphabet contains 30 consonants, each

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<sup>4</sup> See Scherrer-Schaub 1999 and 2002. The typologies presented here all fall within the first phase of Scherrer-Schaub's periodization.

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion of nomenclature in Delorez 2003, 13–17.

<sup>6</sup> In this paper I use the word *script* to refer to a particular alphabet ("the Tibetan script" for example); I use *orthography* to refer to the formal structure of individual letters; and I use *style* to refer to variant ways of writing a script, which need not differ very much in orthography.

of which contains the inherent vowel *-a*. Vowel modifiers for the sounds *-i*, *-u*, *-e* and *-o* are written above or below the consonants. In addition, letters may be “stacked” vertically, and there are special forms for some letters in these stacks. The basic unit is the syllable, and syllables are separated with a small dot called *tsheg*. Larger units (somewhat, but not exactly like sentences) are separated with a vertical stroke called *shad*. Tibetan is written horizontally from left to right.

The Tibetan tradition distinguishes two basic types of Tibetan script, the “headed” or *uchen* (*dbu can*) and the “headless” or *umé* (*dbu med*). The first script is characterized by short horizontal lines (the ‘heads’) along the tops of many letters, like the serifs of the Latin script, while the second script dispenses with these lines. There are numerous different styles within the headless script, including a simple style for teaching children, ornamental styles for official edicts, and a very cursive style for handwriting.<sup>7</sup>

These styles are explained in numerous modern Tibetan calligraphy manuals.<sup>8</sup> The classic study of Tibetan writing, from which most later accounts are drawn is the *White Beryl* of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705). These calligraphic traditions must be treated with caution by the palaeographer. They are received traditions which, while they may derive from older models, are not based on the study of original specimens of ancient writing. The calligraphy manuals are also fundamentally pedagogical rather than descriptive, setting out idealised model script forms.<sup>9</sup> The quite different aims of the calligrapher and palaeographer mean

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7 Styles of *dbu med* include the *'bru tsha*, the *dpe tshugs* (‘book form’), and the *'khyug yig* (‘running script’), and variations on these known as *tshugs ring* (‘long form’), *tshugs thung* (‘short form’) and *tshugs chung* (‘small form’). For a brief account, in English, of modern Tibetan writing styles and their functions in an official context, see French 1995, 155–158.

8 Such as Bkras lhun dgon 2003.

9 Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho provides some very interesting discussions of the history of writing. For example, he states:

The lineage of the development of the script after Thon mi, made to spread far and wide by Khung po G.yu khri and Sum pa Gnod sbyin, comprises the greater and lesser Rdzab (*rdzab chen*, *rdzab chung*), and the greater and lesser 'Bru (*'bru chen*, *'bru chung*). Within the greater Dru there are the Li Tradition (*li lugs*) and the Ldan Tradition (*ldan lugs*), the “straight” (*shar shar ma*) and “twisted” (*dkyus*) scripts, among others. From these, the great scriptures were written in the greater and lesser Rdzab; the commentaries of the Indian scholars were written in the greater 'Bru; and the scriptural tradition of Tibetan scholars was written in the lesser 'Bru. This is how the script spread. (*White Beryl*, p.17)

Although it is not clear how these traditional historical typologies might relate to the extant manuscripts, further work in this area may be fruitful. Some recent Tibetan calligraphy manuals sometimes present script forms that are said to date from the earliest period of Tibetan writing (often pre-dating the 7<sup>th</sup> century, when the Tibetan alphabet was almost certainly formulated). However, as I have argued elsewhere, these “old” forms are usually either based on much later

that the calligraphy manuals, while they certainly should not be ignored, should not determine a palaeography-based typology of Tibetan writing.<sup>10</sup>

Nor should we see the gap between calligraphic and palaeographic approaches to Tibetan writing as some sort of East–West division. The two traditions are equally at odds in the area of European writing styles, as a recent palaeographer has written:

The mutual misunderstandings between palaeographers and calligraphers, between historians and practitioners, each with their own distinctive goals, are not likely to be easily removed, despite the growing interest among palaeographers in the work of calligraphers and vice versa.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.2 Source materials

In establishing a preliminary typology of Tibetan writing styles, it seems sensible to begin with the earliest attested styles, and to move forward from there. Thus the main source materials for this study are selected from the earliest surviving examples of Tibetan writing. These are as follows:

- (i) Stone inscriptions from Central Tibet and outlying regions of the Tibetan Empire, dating from the mid-8<sup>th</sup> to mid-9<sup>th</sup> century.
- (ii) Wood and paper manuscripts excavated from military bases of the Tibetan Empire in the Central Asian desert sites of Miran and Mazar Tagh, also dating from the mid-8<sup>th</sup> to mid-9<sup>th</sup> century.
- (iii) Paper manuscripts from the ‘library cave’ at Dunhuang, dating from the early 9<sup>th</sup> to end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Overall, the chronological span of these sources is from the middle of the eighth to the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century – that is, the last century of the Tibetan Empire and the century-and-a-half that followed the fall of the empire, known in the his-

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Indic Nāgarī scripts or on variations on the later printed style headless script. See van Schaik 2011.

**10** We should note here, though it is beyond the scope of this article, that the study of ancient writing styles in China represents perhaps the longest-established calligraphic tradition, and one that in its attention to the stylistic and orthographic variants of old writing forms is perhaps the closest to palaeography as it is defined here. See for example Boltz 1994.

**11** Delorez 2003, 27. It is clear that palaeographers can learn from the practical experience of the calligraphers, and palaeographers who also practice calligraphy may be at some advantage. Michelle Brown, a distinguished palaeographer-scribe, has co-authored a book on European scripts with a calligrapher (Brown and Lovett 1999).

torical tradition as ‘the age of fragmentation’. As we will see below, the fall of the empire in the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century marks a paradigm shift in the development of Tibetan writing, and thus the typology will be presented here in two parts, falling on either side of that shift.

It is too early at this stage to try to identify local styles of Tibetan writing. In general the styles from the imperial period seem to be quite consistent across the Tibetan imperial realm. After the fall of the empire it seems more likely that we are seeing more localized writing styles. Nevertheless, some of the styles of the Dunhuang manuscripts may be compared to contemporary and later developments in writing in Central Tibet, as some recently discovered manuscripts indicate (see below). Manuscripts from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century – primarily from the Tabo collection in Western Tibet and the Kharakhoto collection from the Tangut kingdom in Central Asia – are helpful models for comparison.

### 1.3 Methodology

Many palaeographers are of the opinion that palaeography is an art, rather than a science. For them, extensive firsthand experience of manuscripts is the only means to acquiring the ability to judge script types and hence to date and localize a manuscript. In this idea of palaeography, the palaeographer is a connoisseur, whose judgement must be taken on faith, and cannot be fully communicated to an outsider. It is largely derived from that least communicable of experiences, the ‘general impression’.

More recently, especially in the latter half the twentieth century, have attempted a more scientific approach to their subject, based on the close study of the order and direction of strokes – known as the *ductus* – in individual letter forms. While there have been some exhaustive studies of letter forms based on such precise measurements, most palaeographers have settled on isolating and analysing certain key letter forms that are specific to a certain script, and using these to help define that script. This kind of work lends itself much more easily to being taught to others than the subjective judgements of the connoisseur.

The typology of early Tibetan writing presented here does inevitably owe much the author’s own general impressions, gained from working closely with the manuscripts for over ten years. However, it also attempts to render these impressions communicable by outlining general features and describing key letter forms from the different script types – although in this case space will only allow a very brief illustration of this procedure.

The typology below is divided into two sections, the first on the styles in use during the Tibetan imperial period, and the second on the styles from the follow-

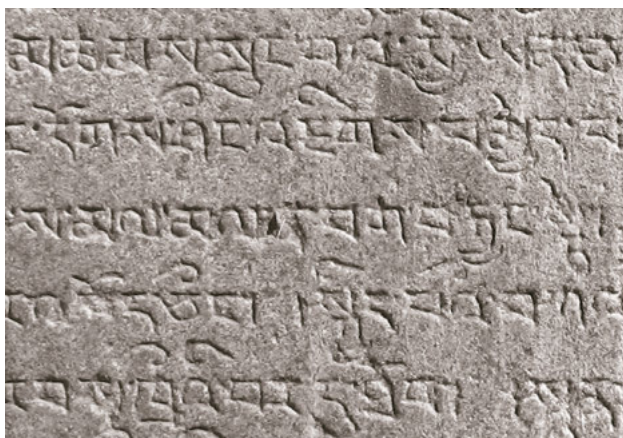
ing century-and-a-half. For each style type we will briefly present (i) the manuscript or epigraphic sources, with their dates and location, (ii) a general description of the style including one or more key letter forms, and (iii) where relevant, the lines of development that can be traced to the styles of later manuscripts.

## 2 Styles from the Tibetan imperial period

### 2.1 The epigraphic style

#### 2.1.1 Sources

The earliest instances of Tibetan writing were probably carved into wood. None of these are now extant. In fact, the earliest examples of Tibetan writing now available postdate the invention of the script itself by over a century. These are the inscriptions on pillars and rock faces dating from the mid-8<sup>th</sup> to mid-9<sup>th</sup> centuries. Despite their distance from the first Tibetan writings, they are still very early records, and represent the first known form of the Tibetan alphabet, the style which I will term *epigraphic*, because of its appearance on stone inscriptions. We can divide the early Tibetan inscriptions into three groups. The first, containing the most important sources for the epigraphic style, is the pillar inscriptions from Central Tibet; the second is a group of religious inscriptions from Northeastern Tibet (Amdo); and the third is various examples of graffiti from the Ladakh area.



**Fig. 1:** Detail from the Lhasa treaty pillar. Photograph courtesy of Kazushi Iwao.



The inscribed pillars (*rdo rings*) of Central Tibet are usually four-sided columns capped with a square base and an ornamental capital.<sup>12</sup>

The Central Tibetan pillar inscriptions are generally records of a sworn agreement (*gtsigs*), whether an edict, charter, or treaty. Most are direct records of the king's own authoritative speech, although some were commissioned by ministers. Thus the context for this writing style is courtly and official. We know nothing about the people who carved these pillars, but if the technique of Indian inscriptions was adopted, there would have been a scribe who marked the letters on the pillar, which were then inscribed by professional stone-cutters.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.1.2 General description

The writing style of the pillar inscriptions is not identical in every inscription. The inscriptions cover a period of about sixty years, and we do see developments in both style and orthography during this time. For the purposes of this description, I will concentrate on the similarities rather than the differences, and argue that there was an epigraphic style in the Central Tibet. The style resembles in many aspects the Indic scripts that were the basis or the invention of the Tibetan script in the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, as I have shown elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the Indic scripts of this period are known to Western palaeographers as ‘acute-angled’ scripts.<sup>15</sup> As with other epigraphic scripts, the writing style of the Tibetan pillar inscriptions tends to prefer straight lines, and does not extend lines any further than necessary. In a similar fashion to Roman Capitals, the letters are evenly proportioned so that most would fit within the shape of a square (though the need to vertically stack Tibetan letters requires a more flexible model).

This “square” character extends to the four-cornered shape of the letter *ba*, and other letter elements like the head of *ga*. The “heads” of the letters also adhere to this principle, being much longer than in later styles in letters like *pa* and *la* (this again harks back to the Indic models for the Tibetan script).<sup>16</sup> Other features that are perhaps closer to the script's Indic elements than to later styles are the diagonal line that extends all the way from the bottom left to the top right

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<sup>12</sup> On the inscriptions, see Richardson 1985, Li and Coblin 1987, and Iwao and Hill 2008.

<sup>13</sup> See Salomon 1998, 65–66.

<sup>14</sup> See van Schaik 2011.

<sup>15</sup> See Salomon 1998, 39–40.

<sup>16</sup> Note that this feature is true of the earlier inscriptions, but not of the later, such as the Treaty Pillar.

of the *pha*, and the fact that the two downstrokes of the *ta* both descend from the letter's head.

The pillar inscriptions are also our best source for the archaic orthography of Tibetan writing, including the strong *da* (*da drag*), supporting 'a ('a *rten*), the reversed *i* vowel (*gi gu rlog*), the *my-* conjunct and the double *tsheg*. The Tibetan tradition record standardisations of language and orthography during the reigns of the Tibetan emperors Khri Srong lde brtsan (756–797) and Khri Lde srong brtsan (c.800–815). Indeed, over the six decades covered by the inscriptions, we do see some of these archaic orthographic features gradually being purged from the writing. In the inscriptions dating from after the second standardisation, for example, there is a decline in the frequency of the use of the strong *da*, the supporting 'a and the double *tsheg*.<sup>17</sup>

### (iii) Further development

The epigraphic style seems to be closest to the earliest Tibetan script that was the basis for all of the styles represented in the imperial period. Other styles, as we will see below, can be shown to be derived from the basic shapes of the epigraphic style, with variations caused by the exigencies of writing with pen and ink.

## 2.2 The square style

### 2.2.1 Sources

This style is seen exclusively in the documents from the library cave at Dunhuang. As mentioned above, these manuscripts date from the early 9<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 10<sup>th</sup>. It seems that the documents in the square style may date from the earlier part of this period, during or shortly after the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang. Perhaps the best example of the square style are the manuscripts

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<sup>17</sup> These changes are clearly seen in the pillar edicts from the reign of Khri Lde srong brtsan (c.800–815) and Khri gtsug lde brtsan (815–c.838). In the eastern pillar at the Sha (*zhwa*) temple (dated to 804–5) there is no supporting 'a and the double *tsheg* is restricted to the end of a line of text. In the western pillar (812), the *da drag* is also absent. Two other imperial pillars from the same period, at Karchung (*skar cung*) and at the tomb of Khri Lde srong brtsan (dating to slightly after his death in 815), also lack these archaic features. The Lhasa Treaty Pillar of 822 also lacks these features with the exception of the occasional appearance of the *da drag*. Note however that the Kongpo rock inscription, which also dates to the reign of Khri Lde srong brtsan employs most of the archaic orthography, suggesting that the royal reforms were initially restricted to inscriptions produced by the emperor and his court.

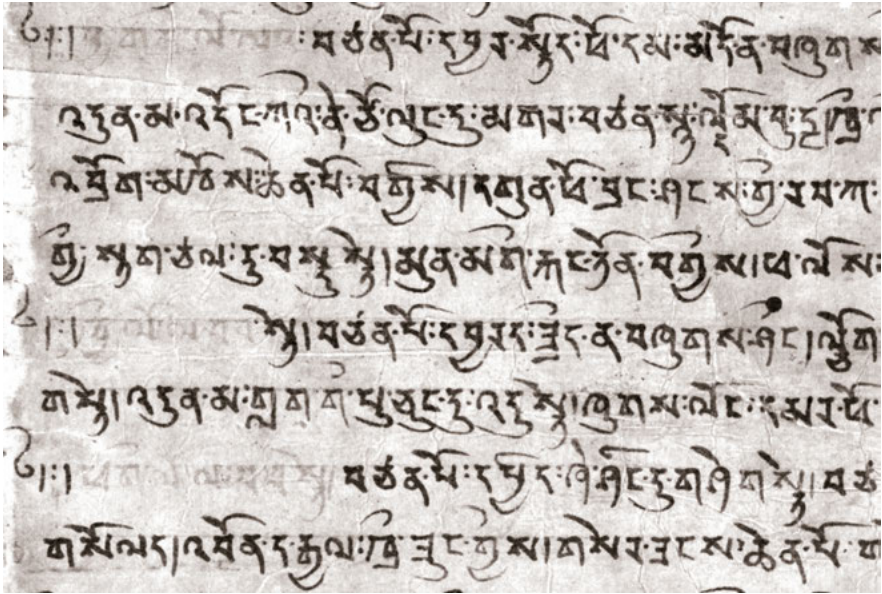


Fig. 2: The Old Tibetan Annals(I): IOL Tib J 750. Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

of the *Old Tibetan Annals*.<sup>18</sup> Other manuscripts in this style include (i) historical or semi-historical texts (ii) legal texts regarding penalties for theft, hunting and other crimes (iii) dice divination texts, which may be related to the legal texts, as dice divination seems to have been used to settle legal disputes,<sup>19</sup> (iv) texts on royal funerary practices.<sup>20</sup>

These diverse texts perhaps show one common theme: they all seem to emanate from the interests of the central Tibetan administration: imperial record-keeping, legal edicts from the imperial court and rituals for imperial funerals. One striking physical feature uniting these manuscripts is that almost all of them are copied onto the blank verso side of Chinese scrolls, indicating that they were not brought to Dunhuang from Central Tibet. Thus the square style seems to have been used in local copies taken from official documents, the originals of

<sup>18</sup> These are IOL Tib J 750 and Pelliot tibétain 1288 (version 1) and Or.8210/S.187 (version 2). Another *Annals* fragment recently identified by Kazushi Iwao in the Institute of Oriental Studies, St Petersburg (Dx.12851) is written in the same square style (see Iwao 2011).

<sup>19</sup> See Dotson 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Note that other similar documents like the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (Pelliot tibétain 1287) and the annals of the A zha principality (IOL Tib J 1368) are not written in this square style.

which may have come from Central Tibet. In the case of the *Annals*, this has been explained by the fact that the dating system therein was used for official correspondence and legal contracts.<sup>21</sup> Since the *Annals* and other documents in this style are concerned with the interests of the Central Tibetan imperial authorities, there is a thematic link between these manuscripts and the pillar edicts, just as there is a stylistic continuity between the epigraphic style and the square style.<sup>22</sup>

### 2.2.2 General description

In general we can say that the square style is based on the epigraphic style, and that the variations from the epigraphic style can be explained by the exigencies of writing with pen and ink on paper, rather than inscribing with a chisel in stone. The changes that occur in the transition from inscription to pen-and-ink writing in other cultures have been noted by many palaeographers. Perhaps the most thorough attempts to define such principles is found in the work of Peter van Sommers, whose graphetic principles are based on empirical studies as well as the analysis of historical scripts, and address the issues of “how and where the hand approaches the writing surface, the manner in which the hand and arm work as a stroke is made, how writers and drawers anchor one stroke to another, and so on.”<sup>23</sup> Following other palaeographers, we can refer to these principles as *principles of ease*.

The square style copies the short, largely straight, strokes of the epigraphic style, with an even width of line throughout. We begin to see the effect of pen-and-ink writing in the small ticks and extended length in the vowel signs, and in the collapse of the head of the *ga* from a four-cornered to a three-cornered shape. We also begin to see the three-cornered *ba* alongside the four-cornered

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<sup>21</sup> Uray 1975; Takeuchi 1995, 24–25; Dotson 2009, 11–12.

<sup>22</sup> It is possible that the original documents were, in some cases, wooden tallies. There are several references in the *Annals* to records being made on red tallies (*khram dmar po*): IOL Tib J 750 ll.55, 61, 116, 136, 157, 248. See Uebach 2008. A gap of one year in the manuscript of the *Annals* (IOL Tib J 750 again) might be explained by the absence of the tally for this year.

<sup>23</sup> See van Sommers 1991, 4. Eight principles are illustrated by van Sommers. To summarize, the principles (as applied to right-handed writers) are preferences for:

- (i) drawing lines in the directions of two, five and seven o'clock
- (ii) anchoring lines to a fixed point
- (iii) keeping close control by minimizing the stroke area
- (iv) starting at the top left
- (v) drawing circles anticlockwise
- (vi) progressing from one stroke to an adjacent one
- (vii) completing similar strokes together
- (viii) keeping paper contact

version. There is a tendency for straight descenders to incline slightly to the right (five o'clock – one of the easiest directions to articulate for right-handed scribes), though this tendency is not nearly so pronounced as in the other written styles.

### 2.2.3 Further development

While the square style seems to have been rather limited in its use in the documents available to us, it – or the epigraphic style on which it is based – seems to have served as a model for the later ‘headed’ (*dbu can*) writing used in woodblock printing (primarily from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards). This is quite reasonable, as the woodblocks are carved, and so represent a return to a kind of inscribed writing. There is in fact a Tibetan tradition that the script was revised at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century based on the style of the pillar inscriptions.<sup>24</sup>

## 2.3 The sutra style

### 2.3.1 Sources

During the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century masses of copies of Buddhist scriptures (*sūtra*) were produced on the order of the Tibetan emperors. Among the Dunhuang manuscript collection we have several thousand scrolls containing the *Homage to Aparimitāyus Sutra* (*Aparimitāyurnāma-sūtra*) and the scrolls and loose-leaf pothi manuscripts of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* (*Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*) in its various forms. We also have copies of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* that are thought to have been brought to Dunhuang from Central Tibet. Documents relating to the copying of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* indicate that this was carried out during the reigns of Khri lde gtsug brtsan (815–c.838) through to the Tibetan king reigning at the time the Tibetan rulers were defeated in Dunhuang in 848.<sup>25</sup> Thus these manuscripts probably date from the 820s to the 840s. A few other sutra-style manuscripts from the imperial period were found in the desert sites of Miran and Endere.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See Ribur Ngawang Gyatso 1984.

<sup>25</sup> The key document here is Pelliot tibétain 999, which has been the subject of numerous studies. Translations can be found in Scherrer-Schaub 1991 and Yamaguchi 1996. Kazushi Iwao has completed a thorough study of the process by which these manuscripts were ordered, copied and paid for, which will be published in the near future.

<sup>26</sup> For example, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* manuscript from Endere studied in Karashima 2006 and Or.15000/303, a folio of the *Uṣṇīṣasitāpatranāma-dharaṇī* from Miran, catalogued and pictured as no. 404 in Takeuchi 1997–8.

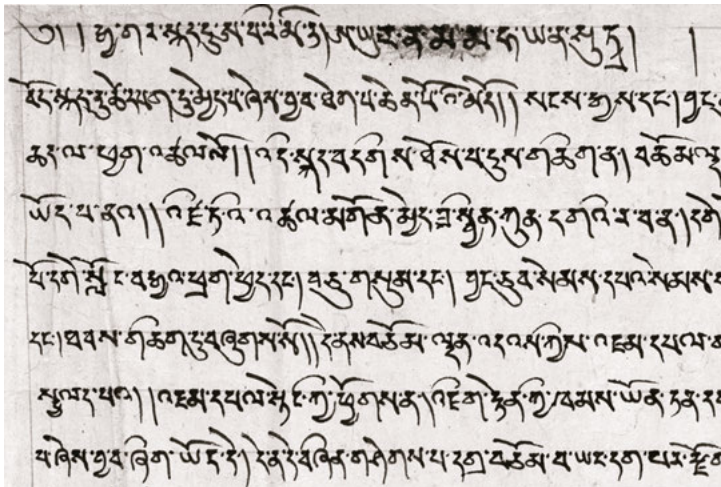


Fig. 3: *Aparimitāyurnāma-sūtra*: IOL Tib J 310.1210. Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

### 2.3.2 General description

The sutra style is somewhat heterogeneous. Marcelle Lalou, in a series of articles published in the 1950s and 60s pointed to two kinds of material: that which had been produced locally in Dunhuang, and that which had been brought from further afield, perhaps from Central Tibet. Though there are clear stylistic differences between the two groups identified by Lalou, and future studies will no doubt develop useful subdivisions, I prefer here to make some useful generalizations in order to define the broad outlines of the writing styles across these *sūtra* manuscripts.<sup>27</sup>

The principles of ease that we saw acting to some extent on the square style are fully in evidence in the sutra style. The script is recognizable as a formal style (as against more cursive styles that we will come to shortly) but can be written more quickly than the square style. In general, this is effected through the reduction of strokes and pen-lifts. In most examples of this style we also see those secondary characteristics that are the side-effects of quick writing, including the increasing length of final strokes (mainly descenders and vowel signs). Another

<sup>27</sup> See Lalou 1954, 1957 and 1964.



consistent feature of the style is the collapse of four-cornered shapes like *ba* and the head of *ga* into three-cornered, triangular shape.<sup>28</sup>

We also see a tendency for lines to move away from the vertical, in the directions of easier articulation at 5 o'clock and 7 o'clock, and there are sometimes small ticks on the end of strokes, where the pen is moved toward the next letter before it has been fully lifted; these two features sometimes combine to produce a slight 'wave' shape in descenders and *shad*. The scribes' preference for keeping the pen in contact with the paper sometimes creates loops, for instance at the bottom of *pa*, *ra* and *sa*. Some corners may be rounded off, for instance at the top right of the *ga*. There is some variation in heavy and light strokes, but this appears to be caused by variable pressure on a flexible-nib pen, rather than careful use of a calligraphic nib. Though most of these *sūtra* manuscripts are plain, some *Perfection of Wisdom* manuscripts by Tibetan scribes are ornamented with zig-zag lines and occasional lotus flowers.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the variation in the individual hands of the hundreds of scribes who wrote these *sūtras*, and the typological difference between those manuscripts produced in Dunhuang and those produced closer to Central Tibet, the general characteristics outlined here seem to justify our identification of a style specific to these manuscripts. This style meets the specific need for the production large quantities of written material. It was taught to scribes (most of whom, in Dunhuang, were Chinese), to be written at some speed, while retaining legibility. Though the manuscripts were written to fulfill the demands of imperial patronage, as an exercise in religious merit, legibility and accuracy were considered important. Manuscripts were edited, and where too many errors appeared, rejected. Since manuscripts produced in Dunhuang could be exported to temples in Central Tibet, this level of legibility had to be applied as an imperial, rather than a local, standard.<sup>30</sup>

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28 This is an example of van Sommers' second principle, by which lines are anchored to a fixed point (here the top of the triangle).

29 For example, in Pelliot tibétain 1307 (f.2v) one of the *Perfection of Wisdom* manuscripts originating from Central Tibet in the imperial period, according to Lalou (see Lalou 1954, 1957, 1964), we see circles, zig-zag lines and a lotus flower motif ornamenting the text at the end of a "volume" (*bam po*).

30 Pasang Wangdu has seen *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* manuscripts in several Central Tibetan monasteries which not only appear identical to the Dunhuang copies, but were signed by the same scribes and editors as found in the Dunhuang manuscripts (personal communication, May 2009). This suggests that Dunhuang may have been one of the major Tibetan imperial scriptoria for *sūtra* production, and at least on one occasion supplied manuscripts to Central Tibetan monasteries.

### 2.3.3 Further development

The most important aspect of the sutra style in terms of the later development of Tibetan writing is the long descenders. This movement away from the square shape of earlier writing influenced later Tibetan ‘headed’ forms, which even in carved woodblock prints preserve these longer descenders. The main difference from the style found in later *sūtra* manuscripts is the general absence of shading, the calligraphic alternation between light and heavy strokes that later became the norm in this genre of manuscript. This shading can be seen in some of the Tabo manuscripts, though in others it remains relatively undeveloped.<sup>31</sup>

## 2.4 The official styles

### 2.4.1 Sources

There are two types of official writing style which we may class as ‘headed’ and ‘headless’. The latter is almost certainly the ancestor of all later Tibetan headless (*dbu med*) styles. Both styles are seen in the manuscripts from Dunhuang and the military bases of Miran and Mazar Tagh (in some cases both are found in the same manuscript). Almost all of these manuscripts can be clearly shown to date from the Tibetan imperial period, and a few of them were almost certainly written in Central Tibet.<sup>32</sup> The headless official style can also be compared with certain rock inscriptions from Ladakh, which probably date to the late 8<sup>th</sup> and early 9<sup>th</sup> centuries.

There is great stylistic consistency across these manuscripts, despite their being from different locations and in the handwritings of different scribes. There is also a remarkable consistency of subject-matter; these manuscripts are mainly official registers of land and people, contracts for sales and loans, and letters between local officials. Many of these manuscripts contain seals, either the square official seals, the small round personal seals or the so-called “finger

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<sup>31</sup> Cristina Scherrer-Schaub (1999) includes the feature of “distinct well proportioned elongated script, in thick and thin strokes” in the third phase of her periodisation, which begins around the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

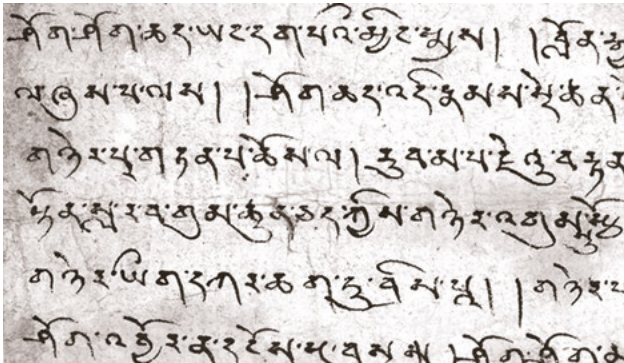
<sup>32</sup> The two Central Tibetan manuscripts so far identified are Pelliot tibétain 1085 (from Lhan dkar) and IOL Tib J 1459 (from 'On cang do).

seals”.<sup>33</sup> Since the official styles do not appear in other manuscripts, they appear to have been taught to a specific class of official scribes.<sup>34</sup>

#### 2.4.2 General description

##### (a) headed

The official styles are notable for a change in the ductus of several letters – that is, the number and order of strokes is changed for the sake of swifter execution. The headed version of the official style is similar to the sutra style, though there is no overt lengthening of downstrokes and vowel strokes (which we often see in the sutra style) and the general impression is of a compact and efficient handwriting. As in the sutra style, the speed of writing sometimes causes ticks at the end of lines, and a tendency to incline in the direction of writing, to the right.



**Fig. 4:** Rules of management of scribes in Dunhuang, imperial period: IOL Tib J 1359(A). Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

##### (b) headless

The headless version of the official style is a fully cursive script, eliminating all strokes except those that are absolutely necessary for recognition of the letters – including the heads that are found in all other styles from the imperial period. We also see the rounding-out of corners, another feature of fully cursive styles in

<sup>33</sup> On the Tibetan seals see Takeuchi 1995, 107–115. Those among these manuscripts without such seals should probably be considered to be copies or drafts.

<sup>34</sup> The evidence for this statement is discussed in van Schaik 2012.

other writing systems. Thus the style is characterised by a rounded appearance. The ‘wave’ shape is also apparent in longer strokes like *shad*.

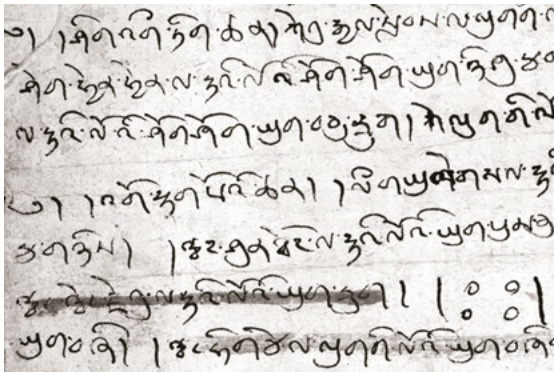


Fig. 5: Official register of scribes in Dunhuang: IOL Tib J 1359(B). Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

### (iii) Further development

The headed version of the official style is not clearly linked to later developments in the script, but may be taken as an early analogue of the cursive headed style of modern Bhutan. On the other hand, the headless version of the official style represents the first clearly dated appearance of a fully-fledged headless script in Tibet, and is probably the precursor of later headless, or *umé* (*dbu med*) styles, as I have argued elsewhere.<sup>35</sup>

## 2.5 The monastic style

### 2.5.1 Sources

This style is seen a relatively limited number among the hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts from the Dunhuang cave. These manuscripts are from the circle of the Dunhuang-based translator Go Chödrup, who was active during the last decades of the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang, during which time he made several translations from Chinese into Tibetan, some of which were well-known

<sup>35</sup> See van Schaik 2012.

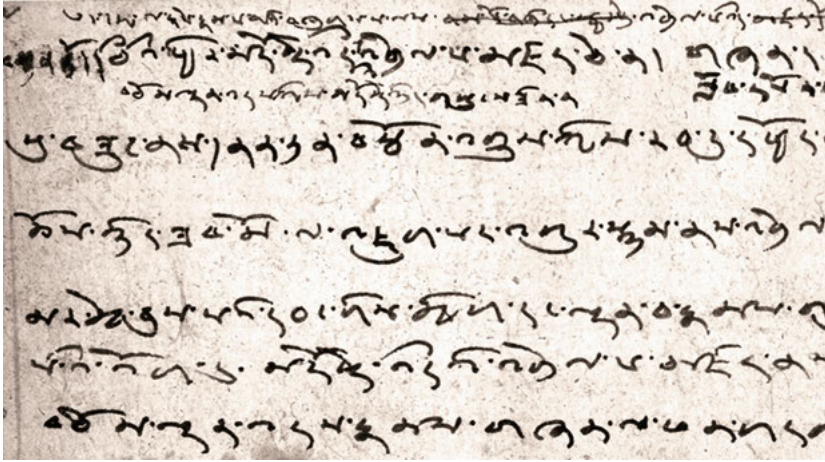


Fig. 6: Yogācara commentary: IOL Tib J 301. Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

enough to be included in the Tibetan canon centuries later.<sup>36</sup> The Dunhuang collections include several of these translations, as well as treatises written by Chödrup in Tibetan and Chinese. Many of these manuscripts are written in a similar handwriting, and Daishun Ueyama has argued that some are in the hand of Chödrup himself.<sup>37</sup> Whether this is the case or not, we can identify a consistent style across these manuscripts, closely analogous to the style of the official manuscripts, yet different enough in form and content that it seems justified to refer to it as a separate style, which I call ‘monastic’ because of its association with Chödrup and his circle.

<sup>36</sup> The ethnicity of Go Chödrup (‘Go Chos grub), also known by a Chinese name, Facheng 法成, is disputed, with some scholars seeing him as a Tibetan, others as Chinese. Ueyama 1990 has pointed out that while his surname could be a Tibetan name, the spelling (‘go) suggests that it is a transliteration of the Chinese surname Wu 吳.

<sup>37</sup> Ueyama 1995, 93–94. The manuscripts that Ueyama identifies as possibly being in Chos grub’s own handwriting are: ITJ686 (p.93, pl.12), 687 (p.93, pl.13), 217 (p.93, pl.13), 218 (p.93, pl.13), and PT2205 (=P.ch.2035) (p.93–4, pl.22). Ueyama identifies his Chinese hand in the colophons of: P.ch.2886 (p.94, pl.21), Or.8210/S.3927, (p.94, pl.30), and Or.8210/S.5309, (p.94, pl.31).

### 2.5.2 General description

The monastic style is, like the headless official style, essentially cursive. Even more than the latter, manuscripts often show signs of having been written at great speed. The letters look more ‘loose’ in that strokes are often left uncompleted, leaving small gaps in the letters; for example, the head of the *ga* may be left quite open. The letters are small and compact, and unlike most other cursive forms seen in the manuscripts, they tend to extend further horizontally than vertically. Legibility seems to have been of only minor importance for the writer(s) of these manuscripts, and we might speculate that they were mainly intended to be read only by a small group of monastic ‘insiders’.

### 2.5.3 Further development

The development of this style might perhaps be traced in the interlinear annotations seen in many of the 10<sup>th</sup> century Dunhuang manuscripts, and in the later Tibetan tradition. Such interlinear annotations are usually written a cursive yet compact hand akin to this style.

## 3 Styles from the post-imperial period

Tracing the development of the Tibetan script after the fall of the empire is a formidable task – even when we are restricted to the limited sample represented by the Dunhuang manuscripts. As we have seen, most of the manuscripts and inscriptions dating from the imperial period were probably created by a specific class of scribes trained in a particular style. By contrast, the manuscripts dating from the post-imperial period – from the late 9<sup>th</sup> century through to the 10<sup>th</sup> – testify to the emergence of a much greater diversity of writing styles.

A recent traditional account states that “later, there was no universally accepted script because the master scribes [each] adopted their individual style of writing.”<sup>38</sup> This situation is said to have continued until a standardisation attributed to the prince of Gyantse, Rab brtan Kun bzang ’phags pa (1389–1442).<sup>39</sup> The

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<sup>38</sup> Ribur Ngawang Gyatso 1984, 29.

<sup>39</sup> This prince is better known as the sponsor of the Them spangs ma edition of the *bka’ ’gyur*. See Harrison 1996. Rab brtan Kun bzang ’phags pa’s work formed the basis for the standardization of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (Ribur Ngawang Gyatso 1984, 30).

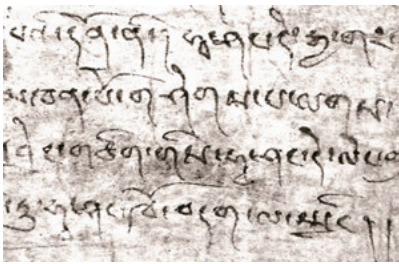


post-imperial Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts are certainly in accord with this description of a time when individual expression dominated the field of writing. The main difficulty in discussing the development of writing styles after the fall of the Tibetan empire is trying to establish whether a group of similar manuscripts represents a specific taught style, or just the peculiarities of a particular scribe's handwriting. We will see below that it is sometimes possible to identify a group of manuscripts as being in the hand of one particular scribe. First of all however, let us look at a few general categories of post-imperial manuscripts and see what this tells us about the development of Tibetan writing after the fall of the empire.

### 3.1 Epistolary styles

#### 3.1.1 Sources

It used to be thought that all of the Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang dated to the period of Tibetan occupation in the area, which ended in 848. In recent years, largely through the work of Geza Uray and Tsuguhito Takeuchi, quite a number of the Tibetan manuscripts from the cave have been dated to after the fall of Tibetan rule, right through to the years before the closing of the cave at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Among the first manuscripts to be proved to date from this later period were letters.



**Fig. 7:** Letter from the Tsongka region, 960s: IOL Tib J 754(a). Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

#### 3.1.2 General description

These post-imperial letters, while not exactly sharing a coherent style, are generally written in a headless style that is more calligraphic than the official and

monastic styles. Thus the movement towards ease of articulation apparently reached its fullest expression in the official and monastic headless styles of the imperial period, and what follows is a trend towards introducing calligraphic elements into this headless style. Such movements between cursive and calligraphic styles have been observed in the development of European scripts as well. The palaeographer Albert Derolez describes this very process in the evolution of the ‘documentary script’ in Europe, and concludes: “Seen in this way, the history of script might be described as an alternation of increasing cursivity, on the one hand, and consolidation and calligraphy, on the other.”<sup>40</sup>

The new calligraphic elements in epistolary writing include: (i) the lengthening of descenders – including *shad* and *tsheg* – and vowel signs – such as the *zhabs kyu* – well beyond what is needed for letter recognition; (ii) a return to sharper angles in some letters, such as *da* and *ra*; (iii) alternation between heavy and light lines (known as “shading”), suggesting the use of a flat-nibbed pen.<sup>41</sup> The letter *ga* is usually in an angular open-topped form that is rarely seen in the imperial period.

### 3.1.3 Further development

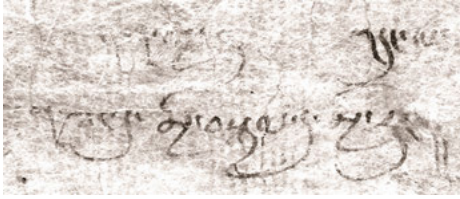
The lengthening of descenders and vowel signs in this later epistolary style may be an early stage in a development toward the letter-writing style of later, and contemporary Tibet known as *khyug yig* (“running script”). The best example of this is a letters contained in the manuscript IOL Tib J 754, which was probably written in Liangzhou (modern Wuwei) by a Tibetan called Smar khams Rin chen rdo rje in the 960s. Though this is by no means equivalent to the fully-formed *khyug yig*, his handwriting displays a fluidity and the very long flourishes for vowel signs that characterize the *khyug* style.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Derolez 2003, 5. Elsewhere Derolez attempts a detailed description of “the various ways of introducing greater formality in an informal cursive script” (Derolez 2003, 128–130). These include (i) a reduction in the number of ligatures, (ii) a move back to a more complicated ductus (i.e. more strokes), (iii) a move toward shading (the calligraphic alternation of wide and narrow strokes) where a broad-nibbed pen is used, and (iv) an increasing angularity.

<sup>41</sup> The shading is more evident in some manuscripts than others; Pelliot tibétain 1129 is a good example.

<sup>42</sup> On the dating and social context of this manuscript, see van Schaik and Galambos 2010. For models of various kinds of *khyug* script, and the similar *tshugs thung*, see Bkra lhun dgon 2003.



**Fig. 8:** Letter from Liangzhou, 960s: IOL Tib J 754(a). Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

## 3.2 Buddhist manuscript styles

### 3.2.1 Sources

Subsequent to his dating of a number of secular documents to the post-imperial period, Tsuguhito Takeuchi showed that many Buddhist manuscripts can also be dated to this later period. In a recent catalogue of tantric manuscripts from the Dunhuang collections, Jacob Dalton and myself have suggested that the majority of these manuscripts date from the post-imperial period, and a significant proportion from the latter half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. This large group of post-imperial Buddhist manuscripts contains a vast array of writing styles.<sup>43</sup>

Until recently, there was no way to determine whether these styles existed elsewhere in the Tibetan cultural realm, or were specific to the areas in which the Dunhuang manuscripts were written, all apparently within the northern Amdo/Hexi corridor area. However, recent discovery of four Bönpo manuscripts inside the ancient Gathang (*dga' thang*) *stūpa* in central Tibet has provided striking analogues to the post-imperial Dunhuang manuscripts. Each of the four manuscripts is written in a style that may be compared to similar styles in the Dunhuang manuscripts. Most significantly are the very close analogues with the 'headless' styles, as we will see below.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> On dating issues, see Takeuchi 2012, and Dalton, Davis and van Schaik 2007.

<sup>44</sup> See Pa tshab pa sangs Dbang 'dus 2007. The author notes the similarity of the styles of these manuscripts to the writing in the Dunhuang manuscripts.

### 3.2.2 General description

#### (a) Headed styles

The headed script continued to be used in many different genres of Buddhist and non-Buddhist text, and in a variety of forms almost defying any general description. For Buddhist scriptures scribes often followed the methods of the imperial-period sutra style very closely, so that these manuscripts are among the most difficult to date on stylistic grounds.<sup>45</sup> Those manuscripts in which the style is notably different from the sutra style share one significant characteristic that is

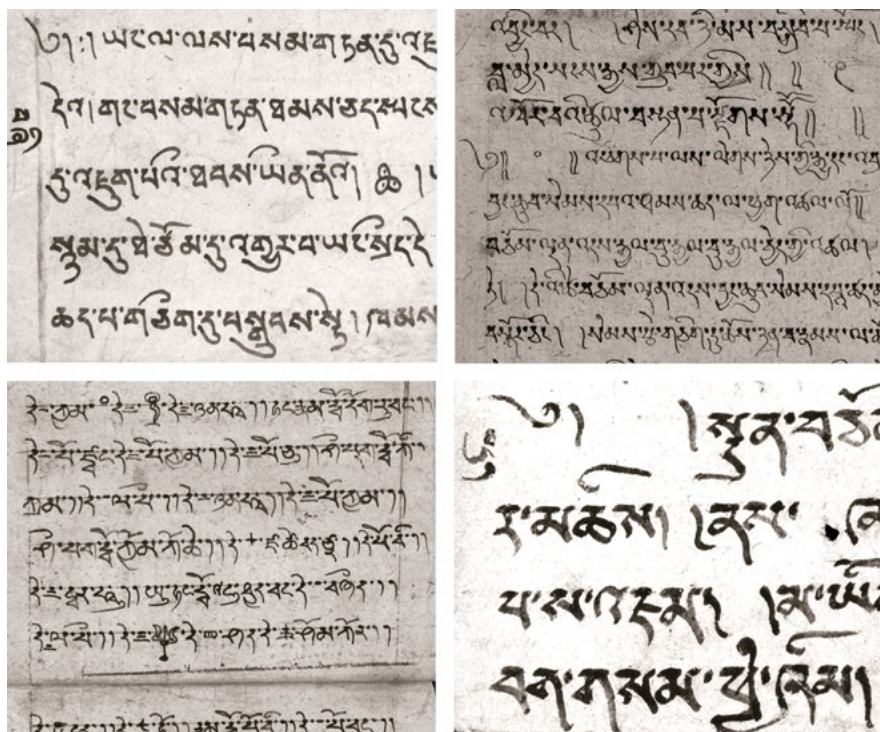


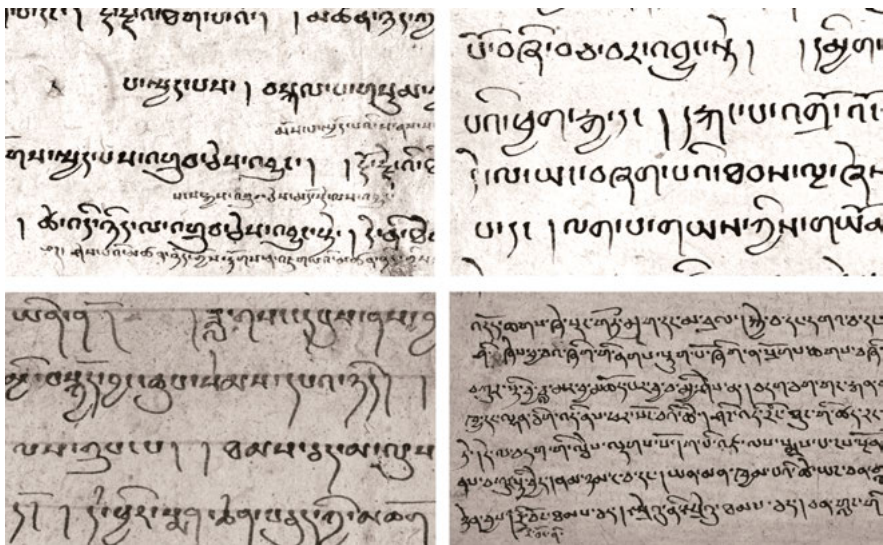
Fig. 9: Clockwise from top left: a collection of Chan texts (IOL Tib J 709), a text on the “way of *saṃsāra*” (IOL Tib J 335), a selection of prayers and *mantras* (IOL Tib J 530), and a Confucian text (IOL Tib J 728). Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

<sup>45</sup> For example, the scroll containing a version of the popular tantric text *Questions and Answers of Vajrasattva* (IOL Tib J 470) is written in this sutra style, yet the scribe’s signature, and the headless writing style of the interlinear annotations show that it post-dates the Tibetan imperial period. On this see, van Schaik 2009.

perhaps the defining element of the post-imperial headed styles. This is the wave shape that we saw appearing more or less accidentally in the sutra style. In these later manuscripts this shape becomes embedded in the letter forms themselves, as a calligraphic element of writing. Though the wave shape is sometimes not very pronounced, it is consistently seen in the descenders of letters like *na* and *ga* and in the *shad*. In some hands this effect is accentuated by lengthening the descenders. As in the post-imperial epistolary writing, we see evidence of the use of a wider variety of pens, including broad-nibbed pens that allow a calligraphic variation of the weight of strokes, and split-nibbed pens.<sup>46</sup>

### (b) Headless styles

It is in the headless styles used to write Buddhist texts that we see the real development of Tibetan calligraphy after the fall of the Tibetan empire. As with post-



**Fig. 10:** Clockwise from top left: a commentary on the *Upāyapāśatantra* (IOL Tib J 321), a *sādhana* of Vajrasattva (IOL Tib J 552), a Mahāyoga *sādhana* (IOL Tib J 437) and a *Vinayavastu* (IOL Tib J 1). Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

<sup>46</sup> In some later manuscripts (for example IOL Tib J 454) we see the mark of a split-nibbed pen, that is, a flat nib which has been cut so as to hold ink better, like the nibs of most fountain pens. The split nib becomes apparent when insufficient ink is used, and the single pen stroke divides into two narrow parallel strokes. Thus far I have not identified manuscript evidence for split-nibbed pens in the imperial period.

imperial epistolary writing, there is a distinct movement away from the principles of ease seen in the imperial period headless styles. The more calligraphic nature of the post-imperial headless style is evident in the sharp angles of letters like *ga*, *ra* and *la*, which produce a more attractive letter form, but require the scribe to cease the motion of his or her pen in order to form the angle. We also find that some letters, such as *ka*, now require an increased number of strokes. As in the headed Buddhist styles, the ‘wave’ element is embedded in many letter forms, and some scribes use shading quite consistently.

Despite the variation in these hands, there is a clear script model underlying most of the letter forms. Recently, the discovery of manuscripts from Central Tibet dating to the same period as these Dunhuang manuscripts has yielded examples of a similar style of writing. This analogous style, seen in two of the Bönpo manuscripts found in the Gathang stūpa and thought to date to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, strongly suggests that this headless style was not restricted to the Dunhuang or even the northeastern Tibetan area, but was taught and used widely in the Tibetan cultural area by the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>47</sup> Even before this discovery Samten Karmay had compared other Dunhuang manuscripts in this style to the so-called Druma (*’bru ma*) style seen in modern Bönpo ritual manuscripts from Amdo and Kham.<sup>48</sup>

Some of the variants, shown above, are:

- A very good example of the 10<sup>th</sup>-century Buddhist headless style is the manuscript of the *Upāyapāśā* commentary written by the scribe Kam cu pa Bu’o ko (IOL Tib J 321), apparently a Chinese from Ganzhou (see image above). A number of other manuscripts, mainly containing tantric texts, are found in the same style of writing.
- The Vajrasattva *sādhana* IOL Tib J 552 is written in a less formal version of the above used for texts of lower status than scripture and commentary (for example, *sādhanas* and ritual manuals). Letter forms are very similar, but less care is taken to ensure the correct proportions and spacing.
- Another style seen in *sādhanas* has notably long descenders, and often attenuated upper parts in some letters, such as the *na*. IOL Tib J 437, and several other manuscripts with this writing style, are associated with Khotanese scribes. A similar preference for long descenders is also seen in some later Kharakhoto manuscripts (eg. IOL Tib M 52).

<sup>47</sup> See Pa tshab pa 2007. We must of course consider the possibility that these manuscripts came from northeastern Tibet.

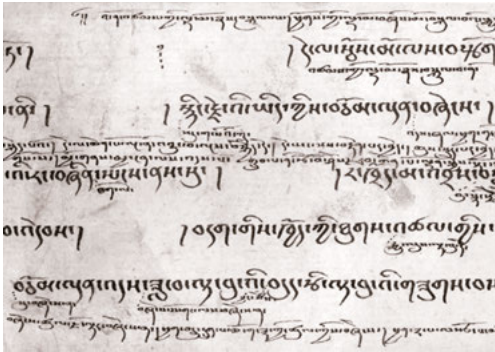
<sup>48</sup> Karmay 1988, 42, 59. The manuscripts in question are IOL Tib J 594 and 647.



- A more compact version of the style seen in some *vinaya* manuscripts, such as IOL Tib J 1, and in interlinear annotations. A similar style is seen in the interlinear annotation in some of the Tabo manuscripts.<sup>49</sup>

### 3.2.3 Further development

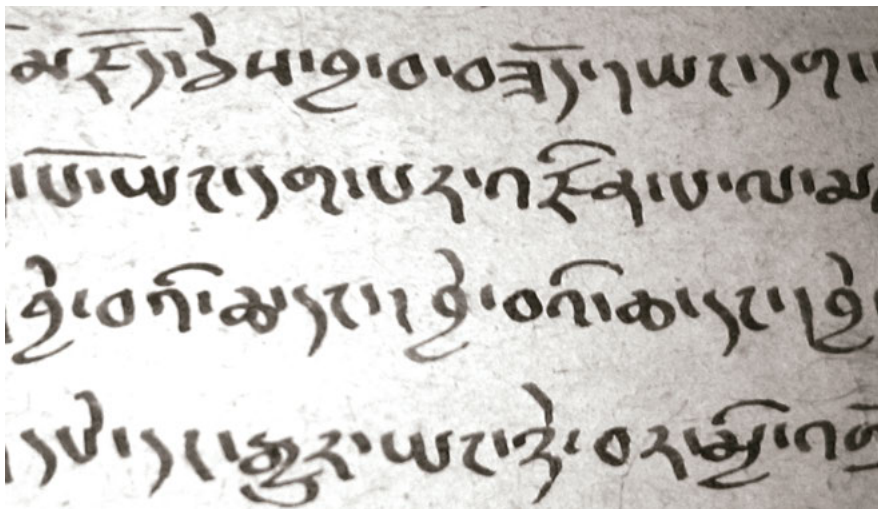
It is illuminating to compare the Dunhuang Buddhist manuscripts of the 10<sup>th</sup> century to the Buddhist manuscripts from the Tangut city of Kharakhoto, probably dating to the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Manuscripts like IOL Tib M 50 are testament to the enduring popularity of the elegant ‘headless’ style seen in IOL Tib J 321 and similar Dunhuang manuscripts. The later manuscripts are more accomplished in the subtlety and consistency of shading, and show how the headless script continued to develop over the following centuries.<sup>50</sup>



**Fig. 11:** Buddhist manuscript from Kharakhoto, 12th–13th century: IOL Tib M 50. Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

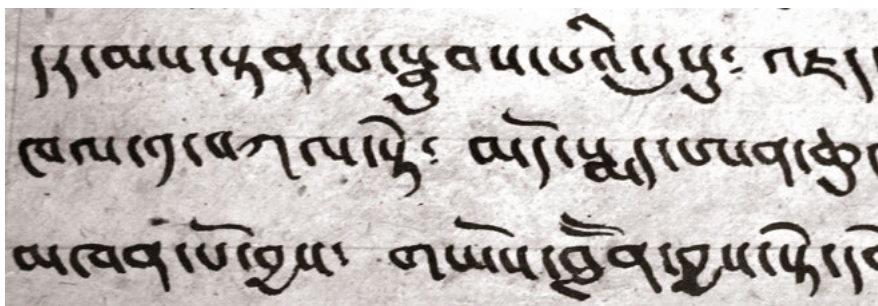
<sup>49</sup> For example, RN421.

<sup>50</sup> A recent fibre analysis of some of the manuscripts from Kharakhoto by Agnieszka Helman-Ważny has shown them to be composed of fibres from the *Thymelaeaceae* family. This paper type is rare in the Tibetan manuscripts produced in Dunhuang, a notable exception being a letter sent from Central Tibet to Dunhuang in the imperial period (IOL Tib J 1459). Therefore it is quite likely some of the manuscripts found in Kharakhoto were brought from Central Tibet, and the writing style therein may be taken as representative of Central Tibetan developments.



**Fig. 12:** *Daśabhūmika sūtra*: IOL Tib J 86. Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

Some manuscripts allow us to trace a line of development that leads towards one of the major calligraphic styles of central Tibet, the so-called “book form” (*dpe tshugs*). The book form is distinguished by a heavy shading on the vertical strokes, contrasting with a light shading on the horizontal strokes. A very few manuscripts from Dunhuang show the emergence of this style (eg. IOL Tib J 86 and 358). We see a more accomplished form in the Kharakhoto manuscripts like IOL Tib M 54 and 55. These may in turn be connected with later “book form” manuscripts from Central Tibet, such as the one below.



**Fig. 13:** Historical text in book form script, pre-20<sup>th</sup> century: Or.6751. Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

## 4 Key letter analysis

The traditional method of palaeography is to analyse and compare the forms of key letters, and we will follow that method here, using the letter *ka* to show the variety of styles and the specific features of the *dbu med* style. I will begin with the pillar inscriptions because the development of the letter forms is best understood when these are taken as the original model.

In the pillar inscriptions, the letter *ka* is composed of four lines: (i) a horizontal ‘head’ (*mgo*), and then from left to right, three vertical lines descending from the head, (ii) a stroke angled or turning to the left known in later Tibetan calligraphy as the ‘tooth’ (*mche ba*), (iii) a straight line known as the ‘central arm’ (*dbus lag*) and a slightly longer straight line forming the right side of the letter, known as the ‘leg’ (*rkang ba*).

### 4.1 Epigraphic



In the earliest example of the letter *ka*, from the Zhol pillar, the three vertical lines are almost the same length. The ‘leg’ is only very slightly longer than the other two strokes, and is exactly the same length as the ‘head’. This gives the letter a very square appearance, an appearance that is characteristic of all the letter forms on this pillar. By the time of the Lhasa Treaty Pillar, some half a century later, the leg of *ka* is much longer than the other vertical strokes. This may be an effect of non-epigraphic writing on an epigraphic inscription, both the length and the angle of the ‘leg’ being features of a stroke written with pen and ink.<sup>51</sup>

### 4.2 Square



Here the ‘tooth’ and the ‘central arm’ now meet when they reach the head. This feature, which is found in almost all manuscript styles of the headed script, can probably be accounted for by the graphetic principle that a smaller number of

<sup>51</sup> Pictured here: Zhol pillar (c.767) and Lhasa Treaty Pillar (821/2).

fixed points in a letter allows for easier pen control. In this case we now have a single point where these two strokes connect with the head, meaning that the scribe does not need to judge the distance between the starting-point of the two strokes.<sup>52</sup>

### 4.3 Sutra style



Here we can see that the 'leg' has become longer, and both the 'tooth' and 'central arm' now point to 7 o'clock (one of the three easiest directions for writing according to van Sommers' graphetic principles). Small ticks appear at the end of some strokes as the hand moves on to the next stroke before the pen lifts away. More fundamentally, it seems that the ductus of the letter may have been altered here so that the 'central arm' and the 'leg' are completed in a single stroke, with two more strokes for the 'head' and 'tooth', reducing the number of strokes from four to three.<sup>53</sup>

### 4.4 Official style – headed



As in the above style, the heads of the letters are maintained, but the ductus has been changed to facilitate writing quickly.<sup>54</sup>

### 4.5 Official style – headless



This form of the letter shows further changes in the ductus, reducing the number of strokes to two. It is clear that, as above, the 'central arm' and the 'leg' are completed in a single stroke, with the 'tooth' completed along with a now vestigial 'head'. Since there is no true 'head' – no separate vertical stroke – we can identify

<sup>52</sup> Pictured here: *Old Tibetan Annals* (IOL Tib J 750), early to mid 9<sup>th</sup> c.

<sup>53</sup> Pictured here: *Apāramiturnāma sūtra* (IOL Tib J 310.1210), early to mid 9<sup>th</sup> c.

<sup>54</sup> Pictured here: official despatch from the *Bde blon* (Pelliot tibétain 1089), early to mid 9<sup>th</sup> c.

this as an *dbu med* style. Other accidental features of fast writing are also observable, such as the tick on the end of the ‘leg’ seen in this example.<sup>55</sup>

## 4.6 Monastic style



Here there is even less attempt to retain the original proportions of the letter, which is reduced to the bare minimum of strokes needed for recognition. The two strokes that now form the ductus of *ka* can be clearly distinguished here.<sup>56</sup>

## 4.7 Post-imperial epistolary style



Here we see the same two-stroke *ka*, but a return to a more carefully-proportioned form, with some shading visible in the stroke of the ‘tooth’. Characteristic of the post-imperial *ka*, the two short strokes (the ‘tooth’ and ‘central arm’) both incline back to the right.<sup>57</sup>

## 4.8 Post-imperial Buddhist manuscripts



In this example, the calligraphic features of the 10<sup>th</sup>-century headless style are clearly visible, with shading on all strokes, and the formal use of ticks on the end of all strokes. Here the ductus has changed so that we now have a three-stroke *ka* again.<sup>58</sup>

Among these styles, we can see at least four different kinds of ductus in a process by which the letter becomes increasingly cursive. Chronologically, this

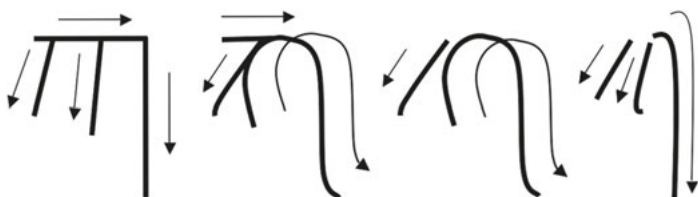
<sup>55</sup> Pictured here: official despatch from the *Bde blon* (IOL Tib J 1126), mid 9<sup>th</sup> c.

<sup>56</sup> Pictured here: Yogācāra commentary (IOL Tib J 301), mid 9<sup>th</sup> c.? [note this is the conjunct *kya*].

<sup>57</sup> Pictured here: Letter of passage, c.970 (IOL Tib J 754a).

<sup>58</sup> Pictured here: Commentary on the *Upāyapāśa sūtra*, 10<sup>th</sup> c. (IOL Tib J 321).

seems to correspond to a gradual simplification of the ductus with a reduction of the number of strokes from four to two, until the appearance of the calligraphic styles of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, when the number of strokes increases to three.



**Fig. 14:** Variant ductus for the letter *ka* seen in the Dunhuang manuscripts, in the square, *sūtra*, official (headless) and post-imperial Buddhist styles.

## 5 Problems and solutions

### 5.1 Bad writers and poor handwriting

It is of course a subjective judgement, but among the manuscripts from Dunhuang and other Central Asian sites there is a significant proportion that appear to be written by a person with only a limited grasp of the art of writing. I believe that these manuscripts are probably the result of people learning the Tibetan alphabet without full or proper instruction, and that a large number of them is found in these Central Asian collections specifically because these were primarily non-Tibetan areas in which many people would have learned the Tibetan alphabet as a second (or third) written language.



**Fig. 15:** Tibetan wooden slip from the Mazar Tagh fort: IOL Tib N 1465. Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.



Once again, we can quite easily split these poorly-written manuscripts between those written during the Tibetan empire, and those written after the empire. The first group are from the imperial forts of Miran and Mazar Tagh. These manuscripts come from the military culture at these forts, of which Takeuchi has written:

Tibetan armies, including previously subjugated Sumpa and Zhangzhung elements, were sent and stationed there, and local peoples such as Chinese, Khotanese, 'A-zha (i.e. Tuyuhun), and Mthong-khyab, were recruited *in situ* and incorporated in the Tibetan military system.<sup>59</sup>

As we might expect from an army composed of such a diversity of soldiers, the written documents from these sites are in a variety of styles, and range from accomplished versions of the official styles seen in the Dunhuang manuscripts and described above, to versions of the square style (including older orthography and punctuation like the double *tsheg*) to stilted and crabbed handwritings that seem to be based on these styles but are clearly not from the hand of an accomplished writer.

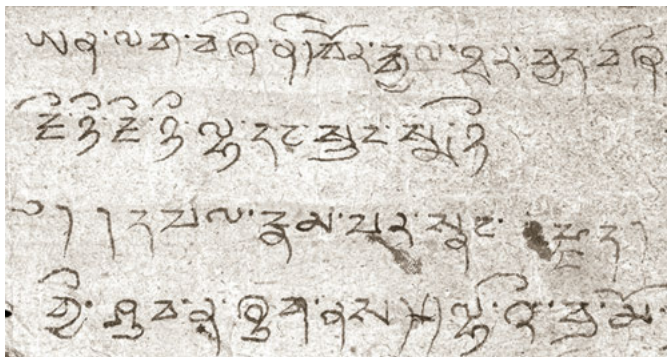
The poorly written manuscripts from Dunhuang often look very similar to those from the military bases, but they are quite different in being Buddhist texts and being dated – where dating is possible – to the latter part of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The texts are overwhelmingly tantric, including prayers, *sādhana*s, and funerary rituals. Only one of these manuscripts is signed by a scribe, a certain 'Phyag Dar ste. The first part of this name is difficult to identify but the second part of it is probably Chinese.

Some time ago I argued that this poorly executed handwriting may have been the result of people writing quickly, perhaps taking notes in a teaching situation.<sup>60</sup> While this may well be true of some of these manuscripts, we have other manuscripts that appear to have been written swiftly but show a much more accomplished hand (like the 'monastic style' manuscripts discussed above). And since some of the poorly-written manuscripts are copies of well-known texts, it is unlikely that they were written at unusual haste.

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<sup>59</sup> Takeuchi 2004, 50.

<sup>60</sup> See van Schaik 2007.



**Fig. 16:** Tibetan tantric text on the verso of Chinese almanac for the year 956: Or.8210/S.95. Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

It may be better to see these poorly executed manuscripts as originating from writers who have acquired the Tibetan alphabet in an incomplete manner, probably as autodidacts learning through copying the letters on other manuscripts. The faults in these writing styles are those of writers who have copied the form of the letter without having been taught the correct way of constructing it; that is, the order and direction of the strokes. Tibetan, like most writing systems, has strict rules about the order and direction of the strokes that make up its letters. This means that even when writing at speed, a scribe's handwriting will be legible to a practised reader. On the other hand, when a scribe adopts a nonstandard stroke order and direction, his or her letters may take on quite idiosyncratic forms, and will rarely achieve the formal elegance of a taught hand.

In recent years there have been several cross-cultural studies of the acquisition of a second handwriting. One such study has shown the results of such self-taught writing in Japanese schoolchildren who were asked to write English letters without formal guidance. The results are inelegant, idiosyncratic, and at times illegible.<sup>61</sup> Several other studies show that when schoolchildren learn a second alphabet, the execution and general shape of the letters are affected by the formal characteristics of their first alphabet. For example, Chinese children tend to sequence their letters with the traditional Chinese method of drawing horizontal strokes before vertical strokes.<sup>62</sup> In our manuscripts the same horizontal sequencing can sometimes be seen in certain letters – the letter *ja* being a particularly clear example.

<sup>61</sup> Sassoon 1995, 16, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Sassoon 1995, 45–54.



**Fig. 17:** The standard stroke order of the headed form of the letter *ja*, and the stroke order for the same letter in Or.8210/S.95.

We may tentatively conclude that many of these manuscripts in poor handwriting were written by local Chinese who had only an imperfect grasp of the Tibetan alphabet, having learned it without a proper instructor, and therefore without acquiring the correct stroke order. Why were these people – who presumably could more easily write in Chinese, interested in these Tibetan texts? The answer may be in the specific nature of the texts in this kind of poor handwriting, which, as I mentioned earlier, are mainly *sādhana*s, funerary texts and prayers for recitation. The profusion of Tibetan tantric manuscripts from the 10<sup>th</sup> century in the Dunhuang collections suggests (i) that tantric meditation and ritual was very popular at this time, and (ii) the vast majority of such texts were only available in the Tibetan language. This would have been reason enough for local Chinese – and perhaps other non-Tibetans – to make the effort to acquire some facility in written Tibetan, even without access to proper instruction in the script.<sup>63</sup>

## 5.2 Identifying the handwriting styles of individual scribes

There is another knotty problem that facing the palaeographer attempting to develop a typology based on a limited group of manuscripts. This is the question of whether a particular style of writing represents a taught style, or just the handwriting of one prolific scribe. In the language of handwriting analysis, this is the difference between *allographic* and *idiographic* variation. Allographic variants are alternative ways of writing the same letter (or “grapheme” in the technical vocabulary); an example in our script is the printed /a/ and the italic /a/. Idiographic variants are specific to individual writers and generally are not consciously affected by that writer – rather they are the features of a writer’s hand that he or she is not consciously in control of, but that give it a particular form.

<sup>63</sup> Of course, as mentioned above, many Chinese scribes wrote Tibetan in very practised and sometimes elegant styles. These scribes would have been taught to write Tibetan by others already fluent in the style. It is also worth noting that one of the central Tibetan manuscripts from Gathang (the *Sha ru shul ston*) is written in a similarly awkward hand. Here we have less reason to think that the scribe was non-Tibetan, but we may still speculate that this hand was self-taught, rather than acquired through formal training.

Now, in cultures that are far removed from us in time and geography, it can be difficult to distinguish these two. In a recent article I and my co-authors explored how we might apply the forensic method for handwriting identification to the Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts. This method involves isolating examples of each individual grapheme from document A, and comparing them with equivalent forms from document B. In this way an analytic chart is created, and used as a tool to identify significant – idiographic – similarities between individual letters in each document. Yet the forensic handwriting expert faces much the same problem as the palaeographer – how to communicate to others a conclusion that is based on his or her own extensive experience of examining writing styles? As the forensic analyst Tom Davis has written:

The ability to create such a chart is very much based on experience. The examiner must know what is likely to constitute significant variation for the purposes of determining authorship.<sup>64</sup>

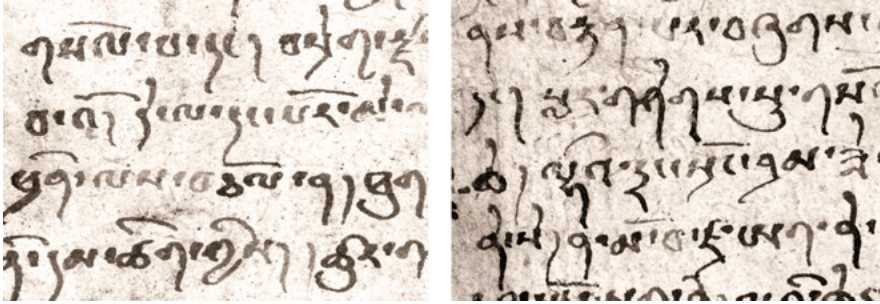
So, while the forensic method is a helpful tool for palaeography, it does not replace the techniques of the palaeographer, nor does it offer the prospect of removing the element of individual expertise and judgement from palaeography.

The question of whether a group of manuscripts in a similar style can be identified as a taught style representing the handwritings of several scribes on the one hand, or as the handwriting of a single scribe on the other, is particularly problematic when we are dealing with the post-imperial Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang. The manuscripts of the imperial period clearly fall into certain groups in which, as we have seen, specific handwriting styles are appropriate to specific kinds of document. Many more of these documents are signed by scribes, so we can also confirm that numerous scribes are writing in the same style. In addition, we have inscriptions and manuscripts from Central Tibet which show that these general styles were not local to Dunhuang.

By contrast, owing to the profusion of calligraphic styles in the post-imperial period, the situation is much less clear. The best approach to arguing that a group of manuscripts represent the handwriting of a single scribe is to accumulate physical and thematic evidence, that is (i) a large number of “benchmarks” – idiographic characteristics linking all of the manuscripts, (ii) other similarities in the group including codicological ones – type of book, *mise en page*, and so on, (iii) similarities in the content of the manuscript itself – not broad similarities

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<sup>64</sup> Dalton, Davis and van Schaik 2007, 4.



**Fig. 18:** Two manuscripts probably written by the same scribe: IOL Tib J 424 and 425. Reproduced by kind permission of © The British Library.

like “Buddhist text” but specific ones like “rituals of water offering.”<sup>65</sup> Such conjunctions of palaeographical, codicological and thematic content are in fact quite common in the post-imperial Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts, and it is likely that many of them do derive from the work of a relatively few scribes.

It is even more speculative, perhaps to identify a taught style among these manuscripts. As the traditional account states, it sometimes seems that every scribe has adopted a style of his or her own. There is some help to be found in the manuscripts from Kharakhoto, Tabo and other collections that date from the centuries immediately following the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In some cases, like those mentioned in section III above, we can see that the Dunhuang scribes are writing in a taught style that continued to evolve over the following centuries. However, the identification of taught styles seems better suited to the imperial period, and perhaps the identification of scribal handwritings may be the more promising technique for the Dunhuang manuscripts from the post-imperial period.

## 6 Conclusions

What can a palaeography of the early Tibetan inscriptions and manuscripts offer us? One thing it can do is illuminate for us the early development of written Tibetan. Though this may perhaps be of interest mainly to other palaeographers, it does touch on some topics that have been debated by both traditional and modern scholars of Tibet, including the origin of the Tibetan script, and the development

<sup>65</sup> This technique of accumulating different levels of evidence is used in the identification of a single scribe in Dalton, Davis and van Schaik 2007.

of the headless style.<sup>66</sup> Palaeography may also hold out the prospect of dating manuscripts by handwriting, when no other evidence is available. In this brief study I have tried to sketch out how we might begin to date the early Tibetan manuscripts according to palaeography, based on the following:

- (i) A preliminary typology of written styles in the imperial period manuscripts.
- (ii) A recognition that a paradigm shift in written Tibetan followed the fall of the Tibetan empire in the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century.
- (iii) A familiarity with the calligraphic elaborations in written Tibetan that developed in the post-imperial period.

Finally, it is to be hoped that a full description (more than is possible in this preliminary study) of the different writing styles that appear in these manuscripts will encourage students of Tibetan history and Tibetan Buddhism to make more use of these primary sources. With digital images and text editions increasingly available through the work of the International Dunhuang Project and the Old Tibetan Documents Online website, access to the manuscripts is easier than ever. Yet many students and scholars still assume that these earliest surviving Tibetan manuscripts, are too difficult to read, or dismiss them as merely of local interest. Just as Western palaeography has opened up the world of European manuscripts for many researchers, a palaeography of Tibetan may help make the Dunhuang manuscripts more approachable.

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<sup>66</sup> Please see the treatments of both subjects in van Schaik 2011 and 2012.



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Imre Galambos

# Punctuation Marks in Medieval Chinese Manuscripts<sup>1</sup>

Generally speaking, written Chinese before the 20<sup>th</sup> century used no punctuation; readers parsed the text based on context, relying on an array of grammatical and modal particles. Another important aid was the often parallel structure of sentences, its organic symmetry and rhythm. Western style punctuation was introduced in 1920 and has been successfully employed ever since.<sup>2</sup> Although for most of its history Chinese writing was fully functional without punctuation, a number of marks had also been used before the modern era. Their presence, however, was sporadic and often limited to educational and commentarial literature.<sup>3</sup>

Naturally, transmitted texts are of little use for the study of punctuation marks in earlier periods because such notation was generally not part of the text proper and, consequently, remained excluded from transmission. Scribal notations were closely tied to manuscript culture and therefore the best method to study them today is to examine the manuscripts, whenever available. In this respect, the Dunhuang manuscripts represent an ideal body of texts for the period of the 5<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>4</sup> They are especially relevant for the early medieval and medieval periods because they comprise, along with material excavated at other sites in Western China (most notably Turfan and Khara-Khoto), the absolute majority of extant manuscripts. Consequently, even though this corpus comes from the

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1 I am grateful to Matthias Richter of the University of Colorado, Boulder for his suggestions and remarks on an earlier draft of this paper.

2 The document titled “Proposal for the promulgation of new-style punctuation marks” was submitted by the eminent Chinese writer Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962), Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967) and several other scholars in November 1919, in response to which in February 1920 the Ministry of Education issued the “Directive on the implementation of new style punctuation marks” (Li Xingjian et al. 2001, 268). Hu Shi’s own book *Zhongguo zhexueshi dagang* (1919) was the first book written in vernacular Chinese and published with modern punctuation.

3 For a general treatment of punctuation in Chinese writing in the West, see Harbsmeier (1998), Führer and Behr (2005), and Drège (1991). The first person to discuss punctuation marks in Chinese texts was the Russian missionary-sinologist Nikita Bichurin (1777–1853), more commonly known in the West by his monastic name Father Iakinf (Hyacinth). In his book on Chinese grammar (Bichurin 1838, 20–31), he described the marks used in contemporary printed texts.

4 Based on the colophons of dated texts, it is generally believed that the manuscripts had been written between ca. 400–1000. The overall majority of the texts are handwritten, with a small number of printed ones, and even fewer rubbings from epigraphic material. As a collection, they represent the largest body of Chinese manuscripts ever found, and thus their significance for the study of scribal habits and the history of Chinese writing in general is invaluable.

periphery of the Chinese sphere of influence and at times may exhibit local peculiarities, it is by far the largest and thus provides a representative image of scribal habits.

What we consider punctuation is, of course, a matter of definition. While the etymology of the English word refers to points (Lat. *punctus*) used for dividing text, there are a number of other types of marks (e.g., question and exclamation points, quotation marks, brackets) that are also included in this category. In this paper I am using the term punctuation in a broad sense for all symbols used in manuscripts, other than the text (i.e. characters) itself. To be sure, it would be a difficult task to give an exhaustive count of all such marks, as new manuscript finds often provide evidence of hitherto unknown types.<sup>5</sup> But for the most part newly discovered marks tend to be individual symbols the use of which had been local and exceptional. The tens of thousands of manuscripts from Dunhuang supply enough material to document the major types of marks in common use in medieval times. Although in comparison with modern punctuation they often seem unsystematic, they nevertheless exhibit a surprisingly high degree of consistency in terms of their functionality and appearance over the course of the six centuries represented by the Dunhuang material. This testifies to an unbroken scribal tradition that outlived several dynasties. From the point of view of their functionality, we can group the most common marks into the following categories: 1) correction marks; 2) repetition marks; 3) phonetic marks; 4) abbreviation marks; 5) segmentation marks; 6) reverence marks; and 7) other marks.

## 1 Correction marks

Although correction and repetition marks (see section 2 below) are not the types that come first to mind when discussing punctuation, they appear at the head of the list here because of their overall prominence in manuscript material. Correction marks are a set of signs used for rectifying mistakes in the manuscripts, by either the writer, or a subsequent editor or proof-reader. Traces of proof-reading

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<sup>5</sup> While the original contents of the Dunhuang library cave represent a finite and closed corpus, surprisingly to this day we still do not have a complete list of all manuscripts. Following the dispersion of the collection, many of the items were lost or simply disappeared from the eyes of the world. With the recent boom in Dunhuang studies, new manuscripts are being “rediscovered” each year, and images of these are becoming accessible in digital or printed reproductions. In addition to this, other sites in Western China, most notably Turfan, Khara-Khoto, Loulan and Khotan, are continuously yielding new material. Especially the Turfan area has been rich in manuscript finds and the size of the Turfan corpus is rapidly growing.



abound in the Dunhuang corpus; there are quite a few manuscripts with colophons that record the names and titles of people who checked the completed work for errors. Scrolls of Buddhist scriptures commissioned by the Tang court were executed with skilled and even calligraphy, with at least three persons checking the result.

It is worth noting that mistakes, and their corrections, are very common in extant manuscripts, and virtually no longer scroll is devoid of them. Even court-commissioned *sūtras* include corrections, revealing that such errors, as long as they were corrected, were tolerated in the final product.<sup>6</sup> A Song dynasty account of how corrections were done as part of the proof-reading or editing (*jiaochou* 校雠) process is described by Chen Kui 陳騭 (1128–1203):

諸字有誤者，以雌黃塗訖，別書。或多字，以雌黃圈之；少者，于字側添入；或字側不容注者，即用朱圈，仍於本行上下空紙上標寫。倒置，於兩字間書乙字。

When errors occur in characters, paint them over with orpiment (*cihuang*) and then write new text atop of that. If there are interpolated characters, mark them with a circle of orpiment; if there are missing ones, insert them by the side of the text. Or if there is not enough space for comments by the side of the text, then use a vermillion circle and write your note on the empty margins at the top or bottom of that line. When two characters are reversed, write the character 乙 between them.<sup>7</sup>

Chen Kui's description is fully compatible with the ways of marking corrections in the Dunhuang manuscripts. One of the most common mistakes was to reverse the sequence of two adjacent characters, which was corrected by placing a small checkmark in the form of ㄣ or ㄤ on the right side of the line between the two characters (figure 1). The second of these is no doubt identical to the character 乙 mentioned by Chen Kui, and also seen in Figure 1/B.

When a character appears in the text by mistake, it is corrected with a deletion mark comprising one or more dots placed by the right side of the character. The most common form had three dots but in some cases there could be one or four dots. For example, in Figure 2/C the character 餘 is marked with four dots, showing that it needs to be eliminated. Figure 2/A shows a case where the copier accidentally repeated two characters but immediately noticed his error and emended it by placing a small dot next to each of the two erroneous characters.

<sup>6</sup> In such high quality elite manuscripts, however, we can observe a tendency to make the corrections as visually inconspicuous as possible, with subtle marks or insertions that would have been virtually unnoticeable to anyone without carefully reading through the entire manuscript.

<sup>7</sup> Chen Kui, *Nan Song guan ge lu* 南宋館閣錄 (1998), “Jiaochou shi” 校讎式. For a good review of the editing process and methods in transmitted literature, see Zhang 2001. An alternative translation is also found in Cherniack 1994, 94.

The dots are occasionally written in another colour, as in Figure 2/D which shows that the copier made the mistake of writing the word *pusa* 菩薩 (Bodhisattva) instead of *puti* 菩提 (*bodhi*), and corrected this by marking the character 薩 with a red dot.

A: Or.8210/S.2067



B: Or.8210/S.1547



C: Or.8210/S.236



Fig. 1: Examples of notation for reversed characters.<sup>8</sup>

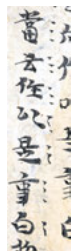
A: Or.8210/  
S.321B: Or.8210/  
S.797/VC: Or.8210/  
S.249(A)R.2D: Or.8210/  
S.2067E: Or.8210/  
S.1920

Fig. 2: Deletion marks on the right side of mistaken characters. In examples A–D the mark consisting of a different number of dots, whereas in E it is marked with a symbol resembling the character 卜.

Another common deletion mark was a symbol in the shape of the character 卜 placed, just like the dots, on the right side of the redundant character.<sup>9</sup> In the manuscript in Figure 2/E, the copier accidentally used the character 侍 instead of the homophonous 仕, but having caught his mistake, marked the flawed character with the 卜 mark and continued the text with the correct one.

The custom of using a dot as a deletion mark is also referred to in Guo Pu's 郭璞 (276–324) commentary to the *Erya* 爾雅. The main text says, “‘To eliminate’

<sup>8</sup> All manuscript images appearing in this paper come from the Stein collection at the British Library or the Pelliot collection at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The pressmark for the Stein manuscripts begin with “Or.8210/S,” and for the Pelliot ones with “P.” (abbreviated from “Pelliot chinois”). All of these manuscripts are, or shortly will be, accessible online through the website of the International Dunhuang Project (IDP) at <<http://idp.bl.uk>>.

<sup>9</sup> For a study devoted to the 卜 deletion mark, see Zhang Xiaoyan 2003.

means ‘to mark with a dot’ 滅謂之點, which is an ambiguous statement explained by the commentator as “to eliminate a character with the brush” 以筆滅字也.<sup>10</sup> We know from a later source<sup>11</sup> that another edition of the text had the character 沾 (“to stain; to soak”) in place of 點 (“to mark with a dot”),<sup>12</sup> which seems to be referring to the technique of painting over the wrong character with orpiment.<sup>13</sup> This reading would also be compatible with the original version of the phrase (i.e. using the character 點), although without the alternate version one could certainly take the verb *dian* 點 to refer to the correction marks beside the mistaken character.<sup>14</sup>

## 2 Repetition marks

Medieval manuscripts habitually employ repetition marks whenever two or more identical characters follow each other. This is an optional notation and in many cases the characters are written out in full.<sup>15</sup> At other times, however, the second instance of the character is omitted and a mark is used in its place. Principally speaking, there are two kinds of repetitions: single-character and multi-character ones. In the first type only one character is repeated, whereas in the latter two or more. While this may seem a trivial distinction, in actual usage the notation for these was somewhat different. The single character repetition was simply marked by a small 丿 mark put in place of the second character. This mark was sometimes written as ㄣ or ㄤ, but the form 丿 was still by far the most common in Dunhuang. The mark was placed within the main text, in place of the omitted second character occupying, in contrast with most other marks, a full character space.

<sup>10</sup> My translation of the *Erya* definition is, of course, based on Guo Pu’s commentary to it, even though originally it very well may have been written with a different context in mind.

<sup>11</sup> This later source is the Song commentator Xing Bing 邢昺 (932–1010) who added further annotations to Guo Pu’s commentary (see *Erya zhushu* 爾雅注疏).

<sup>12</sup> The characters 沾 and 點 are perfectly viable variants, as they not only had similar pronunciation in the time of Guo Pu (as indicated by the shared phonetic component) but also stood for words that were probably cognates.

<sup>13</sup> This technique is equivalent to our modern-day method of using “wite-out” or “liquid paper.”

<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that in the Dunhuang manuscripts the technique of painting over a character was significantly less common than marking the mistake with small dots on the side. Other methods for deletion were to smudge the error out with ink, to scrape it off the surface of the paper, or to glue a piece of paper over it.

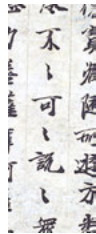
<sup>15</sup> In fact, in most cases where repetition occurs, the characters are written out in their full form and the repetition mark is used less commonly.

Figure 3/A shows two instances of single-character repetitions: first the character 薪 and then in the next line the character 滅; in each case the second character is omitted and substituted by a 丿 mark. In multi-character repetition, the repetition mark is placed either underneath the character or at its right bottom corner. An example to the former usage is Figure 3/B where the characters 不可說 (“indescribable; unspeakable”) are repeated in the phrase “indescribable and indescribable myriads of sentient beings” 不可說不可說眾生. What makes this case different from the single repetition in Figure 3/A is that the three characters are to be read together and only then repeated as a string. Based on the notation alone, it would theoretically be possible to repeat them one by one as 不不可可說說 but this would obviously produce a meaningless string of characters. The reader must rely on the context for disambiguation. In the case of multi-character repetition, the marks could also be written on the side of the text as a single or double slanted stroke, as in Figure 3/C where the word *niepan* 涅槃 (“Nirvana”) is repeated.

A: Or.8210/S.1547



B: Or.8210/S.2067



C: Or.8210/S.116



Fig. 3: Examples of single and double-character repetition marks.

### 3 Phonetic marks

Medieval manuscripts also include a number of phonetic marks with the purpose to clarify the correct pronunciation of a character. In a study on such notation used in Dunhuang manuscripts, Ishizuka Harumichi describes how the marks indicating the four tones of the Chinese language developed from the earlier *pyoin* 破音 marks used for distinguishing a character's default and derivative readings.<sup>16</sup> The habit of marking derivative readings by a red dot is already mentioned in Lu Deming's 陸德明 (556–627) celebrated dictionary, the *Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文:

<sup>16</sup> Ishizuka 1993, 30–32.

母字與父母字不同。俗本多亂，讀者皆朱點母字，以作無音。非也。

The character 母 (“not, do not”) is different from the character 母 (“mother”) used for one’s parent. In books circulating among the general population these are often confused and readers always mark the character *mu* 母 with a red dot to show that it should be pronounced as *wu*. This is wrong.<sup>17</sup>

The expression *zhudian* 朱點 (“to mark something with a red dot”) appears in the above excerpt as a transitive verb, suggesting that at this time this was a technical term. Lu Deming complains that in manuscripts of inferior quality the characters 母 and 母 could not be told apart and ordinary readers developed the habit of using a red dot to distinguish between the uses of what they thought to be the same character.<sup>18</sup> Although the above comment was written with the aim of pointing out a misunderstanding, it also provides evidence for existence of the practice of marking a character’s pronunciation as a means of distinguishing its original and derivative readings.

Although the *Jingdian shiwen* dates to the late 6<sup>th</sup> century, concrete examples of such usage appear in the Dunhuang manuscripts only from the mid 7<sup>th</sup> century. Ishizuka distinguishes several categories of conventions based on the location of the red *poyn* marks with reference to the character itself.<sup>19</sup> The most basic form is when the red dot is placed over the middle of the character, indicating that it is being used in a derivative sense. For example, in manuscript Or.8210/S.2577 the character 樂 appears standing for the words “music” and “pleasure” in two adjacent lines:<sup>20</sup>

是時八萬四千天女作眾伎樂而來迎之。其人即著七寶冠於綵女中娛樂快樂。

At that time, eighty-four thousand heavenly women shall come and welcome him, performing different kinds of music. He shall instantly don a crown of seven treasures and find amusement and pleasure among the women of the palace.

The first instance of the character, appearing in the word *jiyue* 伎樂 (“music”) is unmarked, whereas the other two occurrences in the words *yule* 娛樂 (“amusement”) and *kuaile* 快樂 (“pleasure”) are marked with a red dot. This shows that

<sup>17</sup> Lu Deming 1985, “Wu bujing” 毋不敬。

<sup>18</sup> Needless to say, in this place Lu Deming refers to Sui and Tang manuscripts and is not concerned with the complex relationship between these two characters in the pre-Qin period.

<sup>19</sup> Ishizuka 1993, 32–49.

<sup>20</sup> This example is also noted in Ishizuka 1993, 41. For a translation of the colophon of this manuscript describing the way of principles of adding punctuation marks, see Section 5.1 below.

the default reading of the character was to stand for the word “music” and that other usage had to be marked in order to distinguish it.

A variation of this technique in Dunhuang manuscripts is when the red mark is applied to the right of the character. In the above two cases it only serves to mark the whole character without specific phonetic information. In contrast with this, the red mark could also appear at one of the four corners of the character, just outside its square boundaries. In such cases not only the presence of the dot was meaningful but also its location, because it was indicative of the tone with which the particular character was supposed to be pronounced, and this in turn also determined the word it meant to represent in that context. Within the Dunhuang material, Ishizuka distinguishes four different systems, depending on in which corner the *ping* 平 (“level”) tone, the first of the four, is placed: upper right, lower right, lower left, or upper left. Within each system the tones followed one another in a clockwise direction, that is, if the 1<sup>st</sup> tone was in the upper right corner, then the 2<sup>nd</sup> was in the lower right, the 3<sup>rd</sup> in the lower left, and the 4<sup>th</sup> in the upper left one.

Ishizuka correctly attributes the development of these marks to advancements in philological studies, as scholars needed to distinguish and mark an increasing amount of linguistic information in texts.<sup>21</sup> However, while the motivation behind the use of the *pyin* system was to study the classics “so as to understand difficult characters and sentences correctly,”<sup>22</sup> one cannot but wonder why some of these elucidations were necessary at all. After all, distinguishing the two pronunciations of the character 惡 (*e* vs. *wu*) in the *Lunyu* 論語 would have been fairly obvious for all literate people, since by the Tang dynasty the text had been used as one of the basic books of elementary education. This suggests that rather than simply facilitating the reading of the texts, such detailed commentarial notation must have functioned as a way of emphasizing and transmitting a certain tradition of interpretation.

## 4 Abbreviation marks

Abbreviation marks are used for indicating an omitted portion of a word or phrase which is unequivocal in a particular context. They typically occur in non-canonical Buddhist texts, including commentarial literature and the popular genre of so-called “transformation texts” (*bianwen* 變文). There are two types of

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<sup>21</sup> See Ishizuka 1981, 107.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*



abbreviations: one used for binoms, the other for longer strings ranging from a phrase to complete sentences. The first type is only used for fairly common words where only the first character is written, while the second is replaced by one or two comma-like dots (Figure 4/A, 4/B). Common examples are the words *gongde* “merit” (功德→功、); *rulai* “Tathāgata” (如來→如、); *gongyang* “to make offerings” (供養→供、); *zhongsheng* “sentient beings” (眾生→眾、); *fannao* “affliction” (煩惱→煩、); *qingjing* “purity” (清淨→清、), etc.<sup>23</sup> Because the mark placed after the first character at times closely resembles the repetition mark, once again, the context is necessary for a correct reading. There are cases, however, when the mark is simply a downward elongation of the first character (e.g., Figure 4/C).

A: P.3808



功德

B: P.3808



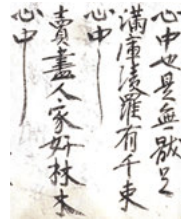
如來

C: P.2133



供養

D: P.2305



心中也是無厭足

Fig. 4: Abbreviation marks in manuscripts of popular Buddhist literature.

Beside individual words, abbreviation can also be used for phrases and sentences which are deemed obvious enough so that the reader can decode them based on the context. Generally speaking, these are strings of text that occur repeatedly within the same manuscript. For example, manuscript P.2133 has several such formulaic sentences which are abbreviated after the initial use. Figure 4/D shows the phrase “yet has no contentment in his heart” 心中也是無厭足, appearing three times in the text. The first time it appears in full but after that it is abbreviated by writing the first two characters and then replacing the rest with a long vertical stroke.

<sup>23</sup> Pan Zhonggui 1981, 7–8.

## 5 Segmentation marks

This is the category of scribal notation which comes closest to our modern notion of punctuation. These marks are used for dividing the text and aiding its understanding, without adding or deleting characters. They are not part of the Chinese script as such but have only been used for learning purposes or parsing difficult or ambivalent texts (e.g., the Classics). Accordingly, these marks appear in manuscripts less frequently than correction and repetition marks, both of which were fairly common, forming an integral part of medieval manuscript culture.

In our modern age we are accustomed to relying on a highly standardised system of punctuation marks and these specify the grammatical relationships within a text with considerable regularity. But consistency in this respect is certainly a modern invention even in Western languages. In contrast with this, medieval Chinese scribes divided the text into smaller segments, indicating groups of characters that belonged together. Nothing in this practice distinguished the end of a sentence in the modern sense of the word; the text seemed to consist of a succession of shorter “chunks,” each of which was only a few characters long. Similarly, while the modern understanding of punctuation acknowledges its value for signifying the mood and tone of sentences (e.g., exclamation and question marks), in Chinese manuscripts this was almost never the case, and such nuances were thought to have been sufficiently indicated in the text itself, not the least with a series of modal particles.

When studying the Dunhuang manuscripts, it is probably a good practice not to adhere too closely to our modern notion of punctuation, since the medieval understanding of grammatical constituents and syntactic relations was in many ways different from ours.<sup>24</sup> Instead, it seems more reasonable to begin our investigation with the contemporary functionality of the marks, and only then try to draw parallels with modern usage. Based on their use in context, we can distinguish the following types of marks:

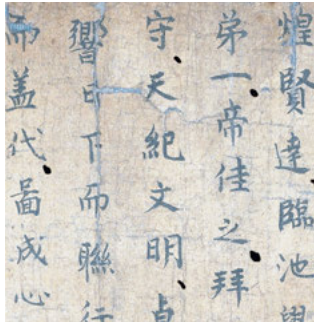
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<sup>24</sup> For example, in Li Zhengyu's (1998, 98) classification of punctuation marks in Dunhuang manuscripts the first two categories are the period and the comma. He observes that the period was often written with the same mark as the comma but fails to acknowledge that at the time people might have made no distinction between the two. An improvement in this respect is the work of Guan Xihua (2002) who categorized the marks in the Dunhuang corpus primarily on the basis of their visual appearance and within each category described the function of a particular mark. From the point of view of methodology, the best approach is that of Pan Zhonggui (1981) whose classification is based on the functionality of marks within the manuscripts.

## 5.1 Separation marks

These are dots in the form of a modern serial comma (,) or a period (。), used for separating smaller bits of texts, which normally do not exceed a few characters. There seems to be no distinction between the two marks, both of them could be used in the same context, and often there were in-between forms. In figure 5/A, for example, red comma-type marks are placed after every few characters, much where we would punctuate the text today with commas and periods. However, the same comma-like symbol is used consistently throughout the manuscript, showing the lack of distinction between a pause and a full stop. Another example in Figure 5/B is a copy of the *Maoshi Zhengjian* 毛詩鄭箋, where the text is divided by the same kind of red dots. Interestingly, the punctuation also extends to the commentaries placed in two-column small script between the main text.<sup>25</sup>

A: P.4010



B: Or.8210/S.10



**Fig. 5:** Separation marks. (The marks on both manuscript images have been retraced in black because the originals red marks are too faint to be easily visible in a black-and-white print.)

<sup>25</sup> A fascinating aspect of this manuscript is that phonetic readings of selected characters from the main text appear on the verso, exactly where the annotated character is. The user has to hold the paper to the light in order to be able to see the connection between the two sides. See Ishizuka 1970, 5.

Both of the above cases are examples of secondary punctuation when the marks were added not by the copier but someone else who used the text sometime later. We are fortunate to have among the Dunhuang manuscripts a description of the motivation behind such subsequent mark-up. In manuscript Or.8210/S.2577, a 7<sup>th</sup>-century scroll containing fascicle 8 of the *Lotus sūtra*, the punctuator explains his reasons in the colophon the following way:

余為初學讀此經者不識文句，故憑點之。亦不看科段，亦不論起盡，多以四字為句，若有四字外句者，然始點之；但是四字句者，絕不加點。別為作為(帷委反)；別行作行(閑更反)。如此之流，聊復分別。後之見者，勿怪下朱，言錯點也。

I punctuated this *sūtra* for beginner students who read it but are unfamiliar with the segmentation of the text. I neither paid attention to larger sections, nor considered their beginning and end. For the most part segments consist of four characters and I started punctuating them when the segments did not comprise four characters. But for four-character segments I added no dots whatsoever. The alternate reading of the character 為 refers to when it is pronounced as 帷委反; the alternate reading of the character 行 refers to when it is pronounced as 閑更反.<sup>26</sup> In this manner, I tentatively distinguished them. Let those who see this later not blame me for using red marks and say that the punctuation is flawed.

The description explains that the punctuator added the marks for the sake of beginners who did not know how to parse the text. But even these novices would have been familiar with the general rule of four-character units in literary Chinese and thus only places where this was not the case had to be marked. Similarly, red *poyin* marks appear in the manuscript only for characters the reading of which in that particular context deviates from their common one. This shows that contrary to our modern custom of punctuating a text thoroughly, in medieval China punctuation was used, if used at all, primarily for solving ambiguities or difficulties. As a result, the system of punctuation we can discern from the Dunhuang manuscripts often appears inconsistent, since a punctuator did not strive for being consistent but concentrated instead on less obvious passages.

## 5.2 Section marks

These are marks used to denote the beginning of a new section in the text. A section is of course a flexible concept, ranging from a few characters to several lines. In our modern terminology it comes closest to the paragraph. Generally

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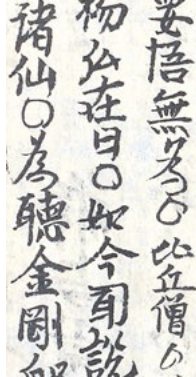
<sup>26</sup> I am grateful to Prof. William H. Baxter for elucidating the nuances of these *fanqie* pronunciations to me.

speaking, section marks differ from separation marks described above in that the latter are used for indicating syntactic units (i.e. sentences or clauses), whereas the former partition texts into larger, conceptually cohesive segments. With respect to their physical appearance, section marks can have various forms. In Figure 6/A, for example, the section mark is in the shape of red brackets placed at the top right corner of the new section; in the same manuscript, red dots act as separation marks (see 5.1 above) to segment the text into smaller syntactic units.

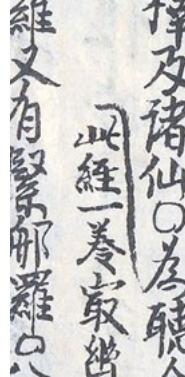
A: P.2418



B: P.2133



C: P.2133



D: Or.8210/S.797



Fig. 6: Section marks in manuscripts.

In Figure 6/B, sections are indicated by large circles (O) placed between characters. Elsewhere in this manuscript, in some cases dots are used instead of circles for the same function. Figure 6/C illustrates how in the same manuscript the large circles are also used to separate the verses of poems, which are only a few characters long and, according to our modern sense of grammar, would often belong to the same sentence. In addition, Figure 6/C also shows the use of brackets as section marks, although with a slightly different functionality. In contrast with the large circles, the brackets mark comments which in our modern practice would probably be consigned to a footnote. In contrast with the short red brackets in Figure 6/A, the brackets in this manuscript are much longer, with their vertical line extending downward along the first few characters of the comment.

The manuscript in Figure 6/D uses hook marks to distinguish the beginning of new sections. Even when the sections begin on a new line, which is usually the

case in this manuscript, the hookmark is placed at the top of the line to emphasize that there is a break between the previous line and this new one. In a few instances, whenever space permits, a new section begins on a half-finished line after the mark<sup>27</sup> – Figure 6/D shows two such sections beginning halfway through the line.

With respect to the identity of the person adding the marks we can be fairly certain that the red marks used in Figure 6/A were added by a later punctuator, i.e. these represent secondary notation. In the other three cases (B, C, and D), however, it was the copier who added the marks while he was copying the manuscript.

Beside the marks described here, the most common way of indicating a new section was by starting a new line, leaving the rest of the previous one empty. In an effort to make the structure of the text visually more apparent, indentation was also commonly used. For example, colophons appended at the end of manuscripts were typically indented and separated from the main text by several lines worth of empty space. Yet another way of controlling the layout was the use of condensed spacing for the characters, most commonly used for stanzas embedded in Buddhist *sūtras*, as well as chapter titles – these served as obvious separators between sections.

## 6 Reverence mark

This mark is not an actual symbol but an empty space<sup>28</sup> placed before the name or title of a person who is venerated by the community producing the manuscript. Usually the space equals to a single character but occasionally it could be longer. In some cases, not only the names of revered personages were written in this manner but also their attributes. Obviously, the significance of this kind of notation was to draw the reader's attention to the particular spot on the page, to make the name or title stand out from the rest of the text. The traditional Chinese term

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<sup>27</sup> This is only true for smaller sections which can fit onto the remaining space of the line. Sections that begin halfway through a line invariably end on that same line. If the new section is longer, it begins on a new line.

<sup>28</sup> In taking space as a form of punctuation I am following the modern Western understanding according to which any symbol used to separate or group text can be considered punctuation. See, for example, "Space as a form of punctuation" (Lloyd and Warfel 1957, 368–370).



for this device is *jingkong* 敬空 (“reverence space”) and it is usually traced back to a description by Shen Gua 沈括 (1031–1095).<sup>29</sup>

In the manuscript in Figure 7/A, a space is left blank before the word *huangdi* 皇帝 (“emperor”). As an example for the use of a space before a personal name, Figure 7/B shows a segment from the text called “The story of Master Yuan from Mount Lu” 廬山遠公話, where the name of Master Yuan 遠公 is preceded by an empty space.

A: Or.8210/S.3071



B: Or.8210/S.2073

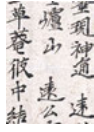


Fig. 7: Blank space left before titles and names as a sign of respect.

## 7 Other marks

The above types of marks represent the most frequently seen ones in the Dunhuang corpus. In categorising the common marks, I intentionally concentrated on manuscripts with running text, that is, texts which consist of longer sequences of sentences. The ones used in this paper were canonical or commentarial works of the main traditions of Chinese religion or philosophy. However, there are also manuscripts, although fewer in number, in which content is stored in a highly structured manner. These are the dictionaries, prescription manuals, bibliographic catalogues, registers, etc. which organize a large number of short records into a database-type format. In order to preserve the transparency of their structure, such manuscripts utilise a fairly consistent system of punctuation and layout, much more so than the ones with a linear flow of text. Therefore, one could collect a much larger repertoire of marks which would not, however, be necessarily representative for the majority of Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Mengxi bitan 夢溪筆談 2003, 271. Shen Gua, however, describes the term *jingkong* as the space left at the end of official communication submitted to superiors, awaiting their comments and signifying the unreserved acceptance of those. Therefore, although this usage of space is also a sign of respect, it nevertheless serves a different function from the examples here.

<sup>30</sup> In fact, in the classifications of Guan Xihua (2002) and Li Zhengyu (1988) the majority of the punctuation marks come from such database-like texts, especially rhyme dictionaries, and in

The systematic use of punctuation in such texts is documented in the *Shitong* 史通, an 8<sup>th</sup> century work on historiography by Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721):

昔陶隱居《本草》藥有冷熱味者朱墨點其名阮孝緒《七錄》書有文德殿者丹筆寫其字由是區分有別品類可知。

In old times, Tao Yinju [i.e. Tao Hongjing 陶弘景; 456–536] in his *Bencao* (*Materia Medica*) used red and black dots to mark the names of herbs with cold and hot tastes [i.e. effects]. Ruan Xiaoxu (479–536) in his *Qilu* (*The Seven Records Catalogue*) wrote out the titles of books from the Wende Palace collection with a red brush. By this means differences were distinguishable and categories recognizable.<sup>31</sup>

The *Bencao* was essentially an inventory of herbs, and the *Qilu* a catalogue of books, thus both were compilations of a series of individual entries, similar to modern databases. The coherent use of a sophisticated system of color dots was an effective method to signify the hierarchies and relationships in the texts. An interest in the accessibility of records is voiced in the “Foreword” of Lu Deming’s 陸德明 (556–627) celebrated dictionary, the *Jingdian shiwen* where he explains that he “wrote the text of the classics in black ink and the annotations to those with red characters, in order to distinguish the two and so that they can be located easily.”<sup>32</sup>

## 8 Summary

The Dunhuang manuscripts demonstrate the existence of a sophisticated and mature system of punctuation in the scribal tradition of early medieval and medieval times. While Chinese writing in general functioned well without punctuation, a series of marks were used by the scribes and readers on a daily basis. Some of the marks (i.e. correction, repetition, abbreviation and reverence marks) were part of the scribal habits, while others (i.e. phonetic and segmentation marks) were primarily used in commentarial and educational contexts. In addition, a more elaborate and fairly consistent notational system was employed in inventory-type texts, such as dictionaries, prescription manuals, catalogues, registers.

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some cases are rather atypical for the entire corpus. One of the marks they documented was, for example, the so-called “substitution mark” occurring only in a limited number of dictionaries as a symbol roughly equivalent to the “tilde” or “swung-dash” used in modern lexicography. In contrast with their approach, the categories and examples recorded by Pan Zhonggui (1981) and Ishizuka (1970, 1981, 1993) are more representative, as they originate from more typical manuscripts with continuous text.

<sup>31</sup> Liu Zhiji, *Shitong* 1997, 127.

<sup>32</sup> Lu Deming 1985, “Preface” 序錄.

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James Robson

## The Archive Inside: Manuscripts Found within Chinese Religious Statues

Printed books will never be the equivalent of handwritten codices, especially since printed books are often deficient in spelling and appearance.

Trithemius, "In Praise of Copying"

It has taken scholars of Chinese religions a rather long time to come to terms with the limitations of working solely with incunabula and later typeset editions of texts and to realize the potential virtues of working with manuscript versions of texts. In the present digital age, new avenues of scholarship have been opened up, but the distance between contemporary scholars and pre-modern manuscripts has grown even further apart. Attention to Chinese religious manuscripts in the age of print (and digitisation) has suffered in part at least due to the high profile history of the invention and development of printing technology in China from about the 7<sup>th</sup> century onward. Although the printing of individual texts and canons accelerated rapidly from the 10<sup>th</sup> century to the present, that trend did not lead to a disappearance of manuscript culture. The rich history of manuscript culture in China has been traced (thanks to a richly documented archaeological record) from bamboo or wooden slips tied with cords, to the use of silk, silk waste, old linen, rags, fish nets, hemp, and mulberry bark used to make a paste which was dried and used like paper.<sup>1</sup> Despite the development of new technologies and new media, the practice of producing handwritten versions of texts on paper persisted alongside of the new technology of printing and has endured down to the present day. Yet, as was the case with the history of handwritten texts after the Gutenberg revolution in the West, there has been inadequate scholarly consideration of the status of writing in the period after the introduction of printing.<sup>2</sup> We are encouraged to take manuscripts seriously, however, since, as Lucille Chia has noted, there was "an enduring interaction of manuscript and print in China," with some printed books being hand copied and books with handwritten marginalia making their way into print. Roger Chartier has also cautioned that "having invented moveable type, for the most part the East did not use it," since it was largely reserved for particular types of texts such as elite official documents and

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<sup>1</sup> Guignard 1997, 72; see also Drège 1991; and Tsien 1962.

<sup>2</sup> See Eisenstein 1983, 1.

the Classics.<sup>3</sup> Thus, it is not surprising to find out that “although Sung printers were prolific, the majority of books in Sung imperial and private libraries were still manuscripts,” and those manuscripts were usually held in higher regard than the imprints, as Susan Cherniack has pointed out.<sup>4</sup>

Scholars of Chinese literature have for some time realized the importance of manuscripts for helping to reveal some of the ways that what we read today in the received print versions of texts is the product of a complex history of editing, alteration and evolution. Many of the issues that have been raised in that field are equally applicable to the study of religious texts. Xiaofei Tian has succinctly noted the complexity of the situation: “Texts” she writes, “are altered, truncated, and rewritten. Even authorship changes; names are appended to works that ‘look like’ someone’s writing or removed from those that do not ‘fit in’ with an author’s perceived style or personality. The ‘definitive editions’ passed on to us, mediated by the editing of Ming and Qing scholars, must be recognised for what they truly are: the products of layers upon layers of emendations that more often than not are ideological decisions. Copying texts by hand was, moreover, practiced throughout imperial China, despite the spread of printing.”<sup>5</sup> All of this new evidence has served to highlight the processed nature of printed sources, which have gone under the hand of many editors who manipulated the text in sometimes rather intrusive ways by standardising stories, presenting a unified vision of history, and editing out the unseemly. Therefore, while there has been a gradual evolution from handwritten texts to the use of woodblock printing and eventually to a majority of texts being printed with moveable type, manuscripts nevertheless remained in use and there are many collections of handwritten manuscripts related to a number of disciplines – including literature, politics, religion, ritual, theatre, and sociology – that await systematic scholarly study and analysis. We also await future work on a variety of what might be referred to as pre-texts, which would include any type of preliminary draft. In the face of much recent work on the culture of manuscripts in China we are therefore invited to question Joseph Needham’s claim that following the invention and spread of printing, “practically everything in Chinese is either printed or lost.”<sup>6</sup> The recent interest in the study of manuscripts, that the essays in this volume demonstrate, has reached a new level of sophistication, is not entirely new, but is the most recent iteration of

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<sup>3</sup> Chia 2002, 11–12, 40–42 and Chartier 1996, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Cherniack 1994, 33. A similar situation appears to have existed in the West, since as Cerquiglini has posited, scriptoria were held in higher regard than early printing houses (see Cerquiglini 1999, 3).

<sup>5</sup> Tian 2005, 221.

<sup>6</sup> Needham 1970, 24.



a distinct subfield within the study of Chinese history and religion. The field of Sinology may finally be close to reaching the position where we can confidently claim – along with Bernard Cerquiglini – that “the manuscript, which has long been pushed to the margins of legitimate reflection and sometimes even obliterated – the abominable trace of some positivist concern – is now the latest object of analysis,” but we still await some foundational studies that will help to draw together some of the different strands of research that have been completed to date.<sup>7</sup> I will leave it to others to counter Needham’s claim based on empirical evidence from their particular domains of research, but for my part here, I will be focusing on evidence for the persistence of the use of manuscripts in the context of Chinese religious history and local religious culture.

Manuscripts have not been entirely ignored by scholars of Chinese religions, but the focus of that work has tended to be uneven. One could make a persuasive argument, however, that some of the most significant recent developments in the fields of Chinese Buddhist and Daoist studies have been ignited by the unearthing and study of surviving manuscript collections. The highest profile discovery of our time was no doubt the bringing to light of a rich cache of manuscripts at Dunhuang 敦煌 in far western China at the turn of the century. Although the finding of the *Diamond Sutra* – dated to 868 and therefore the oldest dated printed book in the world, though other printed materials already existed – among that cache of materials has attracted inordinate attention, the printed materials found at Dunhuang are far outnumbered by handwritten manuscripts. The Dunhuang discoveries, and subsequent discoveries of manuscripts from Turfan and other Silk Route locales, caused great excitement and spawned an outpouring of studies that infected just about every subfield in the study of Chinese religion. The impact of those studies is still being felt in relation to Buddhist studies (particularly Chan Buddhism and the study of Buddhist apocrypha), Daoist studies, astronomy, divination and calendrics, as well as social, political, and legal history.<sup>8</sup> The large

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7 Cerquiglini 1999, i.

8 The secondary literature on the study of Dunhuang Buddhist manuscripts is too numerous to cite in full here, but see, for example, (in alphabetic order) Adamek 2007; Broughton 1999; Buswell 1990; Demiéville 1952 and 1973; Drège 1999; Faure 1988 and 1997; Forte 1976; Fujieda 1966 and 1969; Gao Guofan 高國藩 1989 and 1994; Gernet 1956; Hu Shi 胡適 1968; Hubbard 2001; Ikeda On 池田溫 1979; Kalinowski 2003; Kuo Li-ying 1994; Mair 1989; Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮 1976; Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮 / Fukui Fumimasa 福井文雅 1984; McRae 1986; Mollier 2008; Nishiwaki 2007; Soyumié 1979, 1981, 1984; Tanaka Ryōshō 田中良昭 1983; Teiser 1994; Yampolsky 1967; Yanagida 1967. The study of Daoist Dunhuang manuscripts has also attracted attention, see Bokenkamp 1997; Kanaoka Shōkō 金岡照光, Ikeda On 池田溫, and Fukui Fumimasa 福井文雅 1983; Mollier 1990; Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾 1978; Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤 1956; Schipper 1985; Seidel 1969; Wu 1960; Yoshioka Yoshitoyo 吉岡義豊 1959–1976.

cache of handwritten manuscripts relative to printed texts at Dunhuang further demonstrates how the use of manuscripts persisted through the 11<sup>th</sup> century – when the caves were sealed – even as printing was becoming more widespread.<sup>9</sup>

While the field of Dunhuang studies has dominated (and continues to dominate) the scholarship on religious manuscripts in Europe, the US, China and Japan for the past century, the continued discovery of other types of manuscripts in China coupled with new manuscript discoveries in Japan during the late 1980's, again re-energized the study of Chinese religious manuscripts. During a series of visits to Nanatsudera 七寺 – an ancient temple in downtown Nagoya – in 1990 led by Ochiai Toshinori 落合俊典 a number of significant new manuscripts of Buddhist texts came to light.<sup>10</sup> The Nanatsudera cache includes a manuscript set of the Buddhist canon that is comprised of some 1,162 works in nearly 5,000 *juan* (rolls) that were copied between 1175 and 1180. Although this set of manuscripts had been known to the academic world as early as 1900, the full importance of the collection was not known until after the systematic survey done in 1990, when it was discovered that this handwritten canon was not merely a copy of a printed edition of the canon, but contained versions of texts that predated the Song dynasty edition of the canon, many apocryphal works (including the earliest extant apocryphon entitled *Piluo sanmei jing* 毗羅三昧經), and editions of texts that were thought to be long lost (including the *Sanjie fofa* 三解佛法, a key text in the Three Stages movement). The initial attention to the dramatic discovery at Nanatsudera (and subsequent discoveries at Kongōji 金剛寺 and other temples) has not led to an outpouring of new research and those manuscripts have regrettably inspired few studies outside of Japan.<sup>11</sup>

The discovery of apocryphal manuscripts and manuscripts of texts long thought to be lost has been a significant development in the study of Chinese religions, but most of the extant texts discovered thus far are the product of elite circles. It has been much more difficult to gain access to manuscripts related to popular forms of religious beliefs and practices. One of the reasons for that difficulty is that non-elite forms of manuscripts rarely circulate widely or freely in the light of day. Over the past two decades, however, scholars doing fieldwork in various regions of China have brought to our attention the surprising survival of wide range of religious manuscripts, including (among other things) handwritten (*chaoben* 抄本) ritual manuals (*keyi ben* 科儀本) and family genealogies (*jiapu*

<sup>9</sup> Carter 1955, 57.

<sup>10</sup> For a description of this discovery and the nature of the manuscripts found at Nanatsudera see Ochiai 1991, and the essays contained therein by Antonino Forte and Makita Tairyō.

<sup>11</sup> One important exception is Hubbard 2000.

家譜). These new discoveries have already forced us to begin to revise our traditional picture of Chinese religions.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the advancements made in the study of Dunhuang manuscripts and other forms of religious manuscripts, the one area of significant new work that I would like to introduce here is the history of the placing manuscripts inside of Buddhist statues. This section will also serve to provide the background and historical context for the following section of the paper regarding the interring of manuscripts inside of statues in the Hunan region. There is a paucity of surviving evidence that impedes our ability to provide a complete account of the prehistory of the practice of placing documents – along with other things such as symbolic viscera and small animals – inside of statues. Based on surviving evidence and textual information, it seems that the practice of placing manuscripts inside of statues is first found in China in connection with Buddhism, and the practice can be clearly traced back to Indian Buddhist precedents and traced forward to developments in Korea and Japan.<sup>13</sup> There is a large body of evidence on placing texts and relics inside of *stūpas* and statues in India. With the departure of the Buddha, as Daniel Boucher has noted, the Buddhist tradition struggled with two competing tendencies: “to locate the Buddha in his corporeal body, especially as left behind in his relics; or to locate the “true” Buddha in the *dharmā*, his teachings.”<sup>14</sup> In terms of our topic here, we find both the interring of relics and texts within Buddhist statuary (and in reliquaries and *stūpas*), from a very early strata of Buddhist history. During his travels in India in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664) observed, “There is a practice in India of making incense powder into paste to make small *stūpas* 5 to 6 inches high. People write [pieces of] scripture and place them into the interior [of these small *stūpas*]. They call these *dharmasārira*.”<sup>15</sup> In confirmation of Xuanzang’s observations the archaeological record has turned up abundant evidence of this practice. In a different Buddhist text translated by Divakara in the 7<sup>th</sup> century we read that “if inside this *stūpa* one encloses the [body of the] Tathāgatha down to even one minute portion of his relics, hair, teeth, beard, or fingernails; or else if one deposits the twelve section scripture, which is the storehouse of the Tathāgata’s *dharmā*, down to even one four line verse, this person’s merit will be as great as the *brahma* heaven.”<sup>16</sup> In short: both relics and texts may consecrate a *stūpa*. Contemporaneous with this

<sup>12</sup> This literature is now quite extensive, see among others, Lagerwey 1996–2002; Wang Ch’iu-kuei 王秋桂 1993, and the review of some of the literature in Overmyer 2002.

<sup>13</sup> On this general phenomena see Robson 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Boucher 1991, 1.

<sup>15</sup> T.51.920a21–23. Translation follows that in Boucher 1991, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Translation here from Boucher 1991, 9.

practice of consecrating *stūpas*, however, is an increasing use throughout the Buddhist world of relics and texts to consecrate statues. In the account of his travels in India and the Malay Archipelago the Chinese pilgrim Yijing 義淨 (635–713) recorded that “when the people make images and *kaityas* (*caityas*) which consist of gold, silver, copper, iron, earth, lacquer, bricks and stone, or when they heap up the snowy sand (lit. sand-snow), they put in the images or *kaityas* two kinds of *sarīras* [relics]. 1. The relics of the Great Teacher. 2. The Gāthā of the Chain of Causation.”<sup>17</sup> In a short sūtra preserved in Chinese entitled *On The Merit of Bathing the Buddha*, translated by Yijing in 710, we also read:

Noble son, all Buddhas, World – Honored Ones have three bodies. They are known as the *dharmakaya*, the *sambogakaya*, and the *nirmanakaya*. After my nirvana, whoever wishes to do homage to these three bodies, should do homage to my relics. But, there are two kinds: the first is the bodily relic, the second is the dharma-verse relic. I will now recite the verse: ‘All things arise from a cause; The Tathāgata has explained their cause; The cessation of the cause of these things; This the great ascetic has explained.’ If men, women, or the five groups of mendicants would build an image of the Buddha, or if those without strength would deposit one as large as a grain of barley, or build a *stūpa* – its body the size of a jujube, its mast the size of a needle, its parasol equal to a flake of bran, its relic like a mustard seed ... If in accordance with one’s own strength and ability one can be truly sincere and respectful, it [the image or the *stūpa*] would be like my present body, equal without difference.<sup>18</sup>

Another short text from Gilgit states that “images of the Buddha should be made either tall or short and with either a relic or with the *pratityasamutpada* *gatha* inside.”<sup>19</sup> There is, therefore, abundant evidence that in India images and *stūpas* were already being consecrated with relics and texts. A later Indian text – the *Vajrāvalī* by Abhayākaragupta (1064?–1125?) – explicates, for example, that “you should at the time of the making of an image leave the head or back hollow. When completed you should write a *dharani* on birch bark with saffron or bezoar and wrap them around the relic which as been purified through the bathing ritual and then place them in the hollow space.”<sup>20</sup> There is, therefore, abundant evidence that in India Buddhist images and *stūpas* were already being consecrated with relics and handwritten manuscripts.

Evidence for the fact that the practice of interring objects and manuscripts inside of statues spread to East Asia is perhaps best preserved in Japan, though

<sup>17</sup> Takakusu 1966, 150.

<sup>18</sup> Boucher 1995, 65.

<sup>19</sup> *Tathāgatabimbakāraṇasūtra* (Gilgit Ms. No. 18). Cited in Boucher 1991, 14.

<sup>20</sup> Bendor 1995, 255. See also Bendor 1996.

I can only mention a single key example in the space available here.<sup>21</sup> In 1954, Japanese scholars made an important discovery while conducting research on the Seiryōji Shaka 清涼寺釈迦. During the course of their research they found that the image had a rather large cavity on its backside (5 1/2" × 11" and 3" deep) that was stuffed with 500 different types of objects. Prior to a pioneering article published in 1956 by Henderson and Hurvitz that statue had not attracted attention by art historians.<sup>22</sup> Based on an inscription on the backside of the cover of the cache we know that the image was made between the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the eighth month and the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the ninth month 985 for Chōnen 耆然 (938–1016), a Japanese pilgrim who came to China and returned in 986, by two brothers – named Zhang Yanjiao 張延咬 and Zhang Yanxi 張延襲 – from Taizhou 台州 (modern Zhejiang Province). The objects in the back of the statue had all been wrapped in cloth and can be grouped into four major categories: intestines, manuscripts, textiles, and misc. objects. The intestines are about 50" long and are made of silk and flecked with ink to make it appear food is moving through the tract. At the end of the silk tube is a circular silk pouch labeled “stomach.” The other end of the silk tube has another object that may be the bladder. Other objects represent the liver, gall bladder, kidneys, lungs and heart. The *ūrṇā* on the forehead may cover another cavity where the Buddha’s tooth relic is installed (at least this is what the inventory list claims).

The “oath text” by the monk Chōnen and his friend Gizō that was completed in 972 gives a sense of their religious fervor and is signed with imprints of their hands done in (presumably their own) blood. The “catalogue” lists all the items interred at the time the statue was consecrated and the cavity sealed. The catalogue also reveals that the intestines were made and donated by three Buddhist nuns from the Miaoshan Monastery 妙善寺 and seven other women from Taizhou. The donors mentioned on the list are exclusively monks and nuns and there is only one elite government official that is named. Most pertinent to this study is the presence in the cache of handwritten copies of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra* and *Lotus Sūtra*. The cache also included a wood block print of the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāparamitā Sūtra* that is dated to 985 – the year the statue was closed – which was commissioned by a donor named Wu Shouzheng 吳守真. There are also a number of pictures of the Buddha and various bodhisattvas, coins, and a bronze mirror with an image of Guanyin/Kannon on it, glass fragments, small pieces of silver, mica flakes, a small brass bell, and over 400 mostly small fragments of 110

<sup>21</sup> See Kurata Bunsaku 倉田文作 1973. The Japanese secondary literature on interred objects is now immense and impossible to cite in its entirety.

<sup>22</sup> Henderson / Hurvitz 1956. The following description of the contents of the statue draws on the report of Henderson / Hurvitz 1956.

different varieties of textiles. In their study of this image Henderson and Hurvitz claimed that many other images would have had just these kinds of contents, but regretfully they do not detail the other statues with interred objects that they may have been aware of.

It is not possible here to detail the full range of manuscripts that have been found interred inside of statues or other objects, but the number of manuscripts found thus far suggested that further investigation and research is warranted. Now, however, I would like to turn my attention to the more recent discovery of a cache of manuscripts that has opened up new possibilities for studying local and popular forms of Chinese religion. In 1984, Chinese customs officials in Hunan province intercepted a shipping container filled with nearly a thousand small wooden religious statuettes bound for the antiquities markets in Hong Kong. The seizure of that shipment did not attract the attention of the news media or scholars and the statues were eventually deposited in the Hunan Provincial Museum where they have remained on storage shelves. Since 1984, four other private collections of statues, each with over one thousand statues, have come to light (two in China, one in the US, and one in Taiwan).<sup>23</sup> Beginning with a project headed by Prof. Alain Arrault of the *École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, all of these collections are now being catalogued and studied. The main object of the larger project is to create a single interactive digital archive and database of the statues by providing pictures of the statues, an inventory of the objects interred inside, scans of the documents, transcriptions of the documents, and rich descriptions of the attributes of each statue.<sup>24</sup> There is not enough space in the confines of this essay to address the particularities of each of the statue collections, but suffice it to say here that nearly all of the statues – despite where they were collected or are presently housed – originated in Hunan province (or in adjoining regions). The oldest extant statue in these collections dates from the Ming dynasty, but the majority date from the Qing dynasty to the present day.

How are these statues related to manuscripts? While there is still much to be learned from the detailed study of these statues regarding the local religious practices of the Hunan region, what is most pertinent to the present essay is what is found inside of them.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, it is the Hunan statue's contents that are their most distinctive feature and sets them apart from similar statues found in other regions of China, such as those in the famous de Groot collection of deity statues

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<sup>23</sup> The most comprehensive description and study of the collections in China is now Arrault 2008. For a brief discussion of the collection in Milwaukee, USA, see Robson 2007.

<sup>24</sup> For a description of the database and some example data entry cards see Arrault 2008.

<sup>25</sup> For more general studies see Arrault / Bussotti 2008; Arrault 2008; Fu Juliang 傅聚良 1998; and Stevens 1978.



from Fujian.<sup>26</sup> The statuettes from Hunan are distinguished by the fact that they contain a small niche carved into their backside that is stuffed with a variety of objects including such things as herbs, paper money, desiccated insects. The primary object in the cache for the purposes of the present essay on manuscripts is, however, a “consecration certificate” (*yizhi* 意旨), which is a handwritten manuscript providing an unprecedented amount of information that is placed inside of the statue during an elaborate “eye opening” consecration ritual (*kaiguang* 開光). I have therefore begun to treat these documents as constituting an alternative form of a manuscript archive that differs somewhat from the kind of documents that one finds in libraries or other manuscript collections. The consecration certificates tend to have a rather standardised form – as we will see below – though the content of the certificate can vary dramatically in length, from a few lines to a few pages. In the space available in this essay I intend to provide a description of this alternative archive and its potential value for the study of Chinese religions.

When one of these small wooden statues is turned around one finds a small cavity that is covered with a plug of wood. Removing the wooden cover reveals the cache of materials and the consecration certificate – though it should also be noted that some statues are also embellished with inscriptions on the outside that share much in common with the paper documents found inside of the statues. Extracting the paper from the statue and preparing it for the making of the digital scan can present problems for the researcher. The paper manuscripts have been folded up inside of these statues for a long time – in some cases for centuries – under less than ideal circumstances. Over time the paper may have become deteriorated due to exposure to moisture, or it may have become “glued” together due its proximity to the organic matter that is also found in the cache. The main issue that is faced is how to “open” them to obtain a clear scan of the document and retrieve the information they contain. At the outset of this project I spent some time working with paper conservators at the University of Michigan in order to develop different techniques for successfully opening up these manuscripts.<sup>27</sup> While some problems still remain, we made much progress in understanding how to deal with the most problematic cases. In most cases, it was sufficient to merely expose the paper to moisture, either by suspending them over a water bath, by using a fine mist, or by soaking them in water. In some cases, however, when the paper was in a fragile state it was best to use alcohol to assist in the process. The most problematic manuscripts to unfold are, in my experience at least, those

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<sup>26</sup> Werblowsky / Stevens / Mourer 2003. See also Yang Yanjie 楊彥傑 2009.

<sup>27</sup> I appreciate the time, assistance, and resources provided by Shannon Zachary (Head of Preservation and Conservation) and Cathleen A. Baker (Senior Paper Conservator) of the Preservation and Conservation unit of the University of Michigan Library.

that have talismans that were consecrated with what appears to be some kind of animal blood (probably that of a rooster) and have become stuck together.

In general, the consecration certificates begin with the precise address of the home or shrine where a statue was installed, indicating the district, town, village, name of temple or Miaowang 廟王 – a religious site that falls between the City God temples (Chenghuang miao 城隍廟) and the smaller Earth Deity altars (Tudi ci 土地祠). Those addresses are given in the designations that correspond to the dynasty and the administrative divisions used during that period and can therefore be very difficult to convert to contemporary locations. Following the “address” is a section that includes the names of all of the patrons who commissioned the statue. While many of the consecration certificates merely contain lists of names, some of them also contain short biographies that can be valuable when used in conjunction with other types of sources, such as family genealogies (*jiapu* 家譜). Now that we have a rather large database of these manuscripts we can begin to study a variety of connections between the names mentioned. Within a consecration certificate we might find, for example, that the name of a son or grandson appears in the dedication of an image to his father or grandfather. That same name might also appear on a consecration certificate from 70 years later, but now as the object of a statue consecrated on his behalf, with a corresponding list of the names of his own offspring who were responsible for commissioning the statue. Furthermore, based on the data on the consecration certificates we can perform a search on a particular name that appears as a patron (or a specific address) in order to gain a sense of what one family’s domestic altar might have looked like.

Next on the consecration certificate comes the name of the figure represented by the statuette. The fact that the consecration certificate provides the precise identity of the statue takes away much of the guesswork that is associated with identifications based solely on external iconographic features. The identities of the statues can be classified into four general categories: national deities, local deities, ancestors, and Daoist priests or ritual masters.

Following the name on the consecration certificate is the reason for the consecration. This section of the consecration certificate can vary dramatically in both the specificity of content and length. The reasons given for the consecration of a statue tend to fall into two general types of categories: 1) those expressing a vow or wish for something, referred to as a *xuyuan* 許願 and 2) those expressing thanks for something provided by the deity, referred to as a *huanyuan* 還願. While the vows to deities often have a rather general, or even formulaic, content – see the example given below – others reveal more intimate concerns, such as a request that a father, mother or son recover from a specific illness.

The final written information on the consecration certificate is usually the name of the carver of the statue. This seemingly trivial information turns out to be quite useful, though it requires us to emerge out of the darkness of the cavity and into the light of the carver's workshop. Once this project is completed and we have the data from all of the different statue collections in a fully searchable relational database, then we can begin to do searches on particular carvers names and paint a clearer picture of the context for the production of these statues. What is already evident, however, is that carvers of statues did not just represent a trade, but they were in fact religious specialists themselves (like those who were members of other guilds). Statue carvers are connected with the guild of wood carvers and their initiation into carving is just like initiation into a religious lineage. The carving process itself has religious elements, and when a statue is completed for a client the carver can then don his religious vestments and perform the consecration ritual. Many of the consecration certificates are closed with a string of talismans (*fu* 符, *lu* 籙) which can invoke the presence of a litany of local and trans-regional deities.

Let us now take a look at one of the consecration certificates [M0094] to gain a better sense of their form and content.



Fig. 1: Consecration certificate from Hunan [M0094], ArtAsia collection, Milwaukee, WI.

This consecration certificate [M0094] begins with an invocation stating that this statue is extremely auspicious and that its numinous qualities can bring protection and peace.<sup>28</sup> Next, the precise address where this statue was located is provided: a local village shrine in the Shaoyang district 邵陽縣 of Baoqing prefecture

28 M0094 refers to a manuscript within the Milwaukee collection.

宝慶府 in Hunan province 湖南省. It also provides the names of all of the patrons who commissioned the carving of this statue, including: Zhou Weichang 周維長, his wife *née* Hu 胡氏, their eldest son Hehan 和漢 and his wife *née* Fan 范氏, the daughters Hejin 和金 and Helin 和林. It also includes the names of the family members living in their house including: Zhou Weizhi 周維志 and his wife (*xieshi* 偕室) *née* Zeng 曾氏, their sons Hexing 和星, Hecai 和財, Heshu 和束 and daughters Xingjin 星金, and Dongjin 東金. The statue is identified as being of their ancestor named Zhou Falong 周法龍, who was born in 1847 and died in 1901. The “intention,” or reason for consecration, is presented in a general formulaic pattern: “So that there will be protection and auspiciousness for all family members, so that the six domestic animals will be peaceful, and that all the family’s affairs will be propitious. May the males enjoy good fortune and the females receive good luck.” Then follows the date that the statue was consecrated with an “eye opening” ceremony: 1914, and the name of the sculptor: Zhou Falei 周法雷.

These statues and their manuscripts provide access to the normally impenetrable realm of non-elite religion as it is practiced inside of the home. The manuscripts also lead us into the realms of local history, religion, and culture, that are not well attested in Chinese printed sources. At the same time, however, these manuscripts lead us out into other manuscript archives (such as handwritten ritual manuals, family genealogies, and documents in regional archives), which help to provide a more robust liturgical, social and historical context for interpreting their content. Despite the development and spread of printing technology in China, in addition to the trenchant critiques and proscriptions of religion at different junctures in Chinese history, manuscripts related to the beliefs and practices of religion can still be found. If anything, the manuscripts found within the statues from the Hunan region – and other recently discovered manuscripts, such as those found at Nanatsudera in Japan – should encourage scholars to redouble their efforts in searching for extant manuscripts. Significant manuscript collections survive in unlikely places in contemporary China. The extra effort expended to unearth them promises to be worthwhile, since their contents will no doubt add significant new bodies of information that are not usually found in printed texts.

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